

INSPECTION REPORT

PARK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Havant

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116473

Headteacher: Mr S Dickinson

Reporting inspector: Peter Rabbett
4240

Dates of inspection: 5th - 9th March 2001

Inspection number: 190297

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive, Community
School category:	Maintained
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Middle Park Way Leigh Park Havant Hampshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr F Deeks
Date of previous inspection:	7 th October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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19720	Ms D Granville-Hastings	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Support and guidance School's care for pupils Partnership with parents Community links Extra-curricular provision
19913	Mr R Garrett	Team Inspector	English	
2919	Dr P Armitage	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
30433	Mr C Corp	Team inspector	Science	
31963	Mr M Padmore	Team Inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
15198	Ms M Cooney	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages	
13122	Ms S Matthews	Team inspector	History Equal opportunities	
12566	Ms B Jones	Team Inspector	Geography Work Related Learning	
2866	Mr R Battey	Team Inspector	Art	
8360	Mr F Peacock	Team Inspector	Music	
7926	Mr J Bowden	Team Inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	Gifted and talented pupils
10448	Mr M Elson	Team Inspector	Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Park Community School is a mixed, maintained comprehensive school for pupils in the 11-16 age range and has 836 pupils on roll. The school population has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and attainment on entry is well below national averages. Almost one third of pupils in Year 7 have a reading age below 8. There is comparatively little movement of pupils into and out of the school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at nearly 22 per cent in 2000 is above the national average. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Over half the pupils in the school have special educational needs which, as a proportion of the number of pupils in the school, is well above the national average. However, a much lower proportion than average has a statement of special educational need. The school has an active community programme operating out of school hours and it is supported well by the community.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Park Community School is a much improved and improving school that is very well led and managed. Its strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. Governors and staff are committed to improving standards and create a positive climate for learning which ensures that pupils aspire to success and are benefiting through the good quality of the teaching. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards as seen in lessons are improving significantly over previous years by the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 as the good quality of the teaching challenges and motivates pupils and ensures that they make good progress in their learning.
- The school's positive ethos, which successfully fosters very good behaviour and friendly relationships, encourages significantly improved attitudes to learning.
- It provides a wide range of learning opportunities, including an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, especially through the able pupils' programme, community provision and in dance, drama, physical education, information technology and science, which contribute to pupils' social development. It has a targeted curriculum in Key Stage 4 designed to meet the learning needs of different cohorts of pupils.
- It has very effective systems, which are well integrated, for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development to enable them to aspire to higher standards.
- It makes good provision for pupils' personal development through the well-constructed personal and social education programme.
- There is strong and effective leadership and management from the governors, the headteacher and senior staff, and a shared commitment throughout the school to raising standards.
- Strategic and financial management are good and much improved since the last inspection.

What could be improved

- Standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 are well below average and are improving at a rate in line with national averages.
- Attendance is well below national average and has not improved over time, despite the best efforts that the school has made.
- Opportunities are missed for enhancing pupils' spiritual development, both in assemblies and in many subjects of the curriculum.
- Planning and provision to ensure consistently high expectations in art and design, information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, modern foreign languages and geography, and to improve provision for religious education.
- Further work to improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that pupils are able to solve problems more creatively and show greater independence in learning.
- Pupils' numerical knowledge, skills and understanding.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved significantly in many areas of its work. There is evidence in pupils' work, and in lessons observed, that the school's confident prediction of improved results in 2001 is sound. Teaching has improved considerably and is a strong feature of the school, making an effective contribution to pupils' above-average achievement. Leadership and management is much improved and has contributed significantly to the good progress made. This, again, is a strength of the school.

The school has made very good progress in implementing most of the key issues identified in the last inspection report. There is a very clear sense of purpose throughout the school and the aim of success for all is embedded in the policies and practices and the ethos which the school promotes. The quality and consistency of curriculum planning, particularly to improve standards of literacy, have improved significantly. There is scope for further improvement in the teaching of numeracy, modern foreign languages, art and design, ICT across the curriculum and geography. The school does not, as yet, meet the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. The quality of lesson preparation and classroom control are much improved through the use of lesson context plans and through the effective use of the school's code of conduct. Assessment of pupils and provision to meet their special educational needs has improved greatly, but more needs to be done in this area. The school's management systems are now clear, efficient and effective. Financial management is closely tied to the school's commitment to success for all.

The school has shown that it has the capacity to improve what it does. It has a clear view of its priorities and targets for further development and is well placed, through the strength of its leadership, to improve its performance in the future.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			Similar Schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	E	E*	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Results in the national tests in 2000 for 14 year olds in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were well below average in English, mathematics and science. These test results were well below those of similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils identified as eligible for free school meals. There were differences in the performance of boys and girls in the three subjects.

The GCSE results have remained well below average since the last inspection, with the rate of improvement from year to year broadly in line with the national trend. In 2000, there were relative strengths in the GCSE examinations in dance, drama, design and technology and English language, when compared with average performance in other subjects. There were weaker results in mathematics, science, art and design, French, history and business studies. There were considerable differences between the performances of boys and girls, with girls outperforming the boys in most subjects. The school's GCSE results were well below average when compared with similar schools.

Most pupils are making good progress in their learning and are achieving acceptable standards in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. The school has set itself appropriately challenging targets for raising standards even further and evidence supports the school's confidence in meeting these targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils are committed to the school and want to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: pupils are generally courteous and they move sensibly around the school. Relationships in the school are very positive.
Personal development and relationships	Good: pupils work well together and are keen to show initiative and take responsibility.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory: the school has not made progress in improving the attendance of pupils.

Pupils show a high degree of commitment and enthusiasm for their work. They settle quickly and respond well to high quality teaching. They are keen to succeed and show interest in their work. Occasionally, the poor attitudes and behaviour of a small number of pupils affect other pupils' learning but most teachers manage these pupils effectively to minimise any disturbance. The vast majority of pupils respond well to the school's expectations and positive ethos. However, poor attendance is disrupting the progress of many pupils and required time to be spent revising earlier lessons to help all pupils to make progress.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	n/a

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.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good or better in six out of ten lessons and very good or excellent in a fifth of all lessons. Unsatisfactory teaching is now rare. This consistency in the teaching contributes to the good progress that pupils make in their learning and the high standards they achieve. Teaching is very good or excellent in dance and drama, good overall in English, science, history, music, physical education and the 'Spotlight Programme', and satisfactory in mathematics, art and design, information and communication technology, business studies, in the GNVQ Intermediate course, and in personal, social and health education lessons. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurs in the occasional lessons in modern foreign languages, mathematics, science, IT and RE.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: all pupils have access to a broad curriculum, although the provision for some of the lower attaining pupils is not as effective. Too few pupils are able to study modern foreign languages. The range and quality of extra-curricular opportunities, especially in performing arts, physical education and science, are good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: support is generally effective in helping pupils make progress, there is good provision in lessons and in withdrawal programmes. Teachers are beginning to use individual education plans effectively.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall: the personal and social education programme is well constructed; there is good provision for pupils' social and moral development, satisfactory provision for their cultural development, although not enough is done to enable pupils to appreciate the diversity and richness of other cultures, and unsatisfactory provision for their spiritual development.
How well the school cares	Very well: there are good systems and processes for supporting and

for its pupils	monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development and very effective support for individual pupils to improve their motivation and progress.
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The school's partnership with parents is good and there are very good systems for communicating and sharing information with parents, particularly in relation to pupils' progress and achievements. Careers education and guidance are satisfactory. There are good links with the local primary schools, post 16 colleges and the community. The school is an active partner in the local Education Action Zone.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: the headteacher and senior management team provide very strong leadership and policies and procedures are implemented consistently across the school; the governors are fully involved and are very well informed; middle management is effective and is supported through an effective system for performance review. Strengths and weaknesses are known and there are very good programmes in place to secure improvements.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well: the governing body is committed to the school's goal of success for all and takes its responsibilities seriously. Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, although the provision for collective worship does not meet requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good: this is a learning school. It has very good systems for monitoring and reviewing pupils' performance and setting targets; good, consistent and effective systems for monitoring the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: financial expenditure is linked to the school's priorities and is carefully monitored; clear targets and priorities are set.

The school has sufficient, well-qualified teachers, enough technical help and adequate numbers of administrative staff to ensure that it runs smoothly. The buildings are well cared for and are sufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum, with the exception of a suitable studio for dance. The recent programme of refurbishment of science laboratories and other spaces has significantly improved the quality and level of provision. Suitable procedures are in place to ensure that the school gets best value from its expenditure, enabling it to provide good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. • The good progress that their children make. • They are well informed about their child's progress. • The good quality of the teaching. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consistency, extent and quality of homework. • Behaviour in the school. • The school's working relationship with parents. • How the school keeps parents informed.

Only a small minority of parents responded to the questionnaire or attended the parents' meeting. Most parents are very pleased with the school and the education it provides. Inspectors' judgements support the positive views expressed by parents. Parents' views on the aspects to be improved are mixed. Some feel there is too much homework; others feel that there is too little. Some feel that behaviour is a

problem, others that the school does the best it can. Most parents are happy with the way the school communicates and how it deals with individual pupils' and parents' issues.

The inspection team found that suitably challenging homework is set in most subjects but that it is not always set according to the homework timetable, or marked regularly. Behaviour was found to be good in lessons and around the school. The school's procedures for informing parents about progress and achievement are very good. The school pays special attention to dealing with issues raised by parents or pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The school does well for its pupils given the very low prior attainment of most, in literacy and numeracy, when they enter the school. Pupils, in the past, have achieved below average results in the National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. However, in nearly all subjects, the majority of pupils are making satisfactory or good progress in their learning and are achieving higher standards than might be expected of them when account is taken of their attainment on entry into the school in Year 7. The above average number of pupils with special educational needs are making good progress. Poor attendance is, however, making it very difficult for a large minority of pupils to make the progress necessary to achieve the qualifications of which they are capable.
2. The school's results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. These results were also well below average in comparison to similar schools. Results have improved since the last inspection and, overall, the trend is in line with the national trend. In all core subjects, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 5 or above and at Level 6 or above was well below average. Performance in English is best at Level 5 and above and, in mathematics, best at Level 6 and above. Attainment in science is well behind that in English and mathematics. Girls generally did better at the age of 14 other than in science, where the boys' performance at Level 5 or above was better
3. When compared with similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), the results in all three subjects were well below average. Pupils are not doing as well in the National Curriculum tests as they are in similar schools.
4. On the evidence of their work as seen in lessons and in their coursework, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is closer to the standard expected nationally in English, mathematics and science, and improved significantly on the test results in 2000. Their attainment is above the national expectation in English, drama, dance, physical education and for boys in geography. It is at national expectations in music, science, design and technology and information and communication technology. It is below expectation in mathematics, French, Spanish and art. In art, pupils' attainment is below the expected standard because the teaching places insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of a sufficient range of art. In nearly all subjects, pupils are making good progress and are achieving much higher standards than expected in relation to their earlier attainment. In English, drama, dance, physical education and history, pupils are making good or very good progress. In music, design and technology, information and communication technology and science, their progress is satisfactory. In mathematics, modern foreign languages, geography, art and religious education, pupils are achieving less well than expected because of some weaknesses in the teaching or curriculum planning. The average attaining pupils, and the majority of the higher attaining pupils, are making good progress in their learning and achieving well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school in Year 7. Most pupils with special educational needs are making very good progress in their learning and their achievements are broadly in line with expectations.
5. Examination results for pupils aged 16 have improved greatly since the last inspection. Since the last inspection in 1996, the proportion of pupils gaining one A*-G grade has improved most significantly and is now close to the national average, and above average in comparison to similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining 5 A*-G grades was close to average for similar schools. However, the proportion gaining 5 A*-C grades remained below average when compared with similar schools. This can partly be explained by the higher proportion than average of pupils with special educational needs, the majority of whom have general learning difficulties, which affected the average points score. Results were also affected by poor attendance across the school but significantly in Year 11.

6. In 2000, when comparing the school with schools achieving similar results in Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils gaining one or more A*-G grade was above average and the percentage gaining 5 or more A*-G grades was about average. Against these indicators, the school is doing better than others in Key Stage 4. However, the percentage gaining five or more A*-C grades was below average. Standards achieved on work-related learning programmes reflect the low abilities of the selected pupils and are broadly in line with expectations of the courses, except that in Years 10/11 more pupils should be challenged to work towards the Silver rather than the Bronze Award for ASDAN courses.
7. In 2000, there were relative strengths in the GCSE examinations in dance, drama, design and technology and English language, when compared with average performance in other subjects. There were weaker results in mathematics, science, art and design, French and business studies.
8. There were considerable differences between the performance of boys and girls in the GCSE examinations in 2000. Girls achieved higher standards in art, English language, drama, design and technology and mathematics. Boys achieved higher standards in geography, mathematics and combined science. Girls' performance in dance, drama, English Language, design and technology, communication studies and business studies was better than the national figures for girls. The boys' performance was better than the national figures for boys in design and technology, English language and geography.
9. Current and recent work, as seen in lessons and coursework, indicates that pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is above national expectations in English, history and drama and is in line with expectations in dance, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, music, physical education and religious education. Their attainment in art, religious education, modern foreign languages and information and communication technology is below the standard expected nationally. Low standards in information and communication technology occur when it is used more generally across other subjects to support pupils' learning, mainly because the work is not sufficiently co-ordinated and does not build systematically on their earlier experiences.
10. Pupils make increasingly better progress as they move through the school so that, by Year 11, in over half of lessons they are working to national expectations and better than these standards in one in ten lessons. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. In many instances, these higher standards are the result of some extremely effective teaching, which ensures that pupils have appropriately challenging work. In dance, drama, English, history and PE they are making good progress, achieving higher standards than their earlier attainment would indicate. They are making satisfactory progress in art, mathematics, science, music and design and technology. In information and communication technology, although pupils make satisfactory progress in consolidating their existing skills, they make insufficient progress in extending their skills and applying them to new problems and situations. Pupils are making unsatisfactory progress in geography, modern foreign languages and religious education.
11. Speaking and listening skills are average. Many pupils continue to have difficulties, however, with sustaining clear written expression and with spelling and sentence punctuation. A small proportion continues to have substantially below average reading skills. These weaknesses also appear in the work of higher attaining pupils and depress standards of attainment overall.
12. The contribution of other subjects to standards of literacy is good overall, reflecting the fact that the whole school literacy policy is well co-ordinated and is being effectively disseminated and acted upon. A review of all subject areas in January 2001 shows that the use of "key words" is widespread and that reading and speaking and listening opportunities are built into the schemes of work in many areas. In some areas, such as geography, history and design and technology, "writing frames" are helpful supports for pupils' writing, although in other areas these are still under development or discussion as to the best way of using them. Subject areas mark pupils' work according to agreed school criteria. Observation during the inspection endorsed the evidence of developing good practice. This was particularly the case with the emphasis on speaking skills and use of key vocabulary in dance, drama and physical education, the use of key words and opportunities for listening in music and the co-operation between science and the literacy co-

ordinator regarding use of key words and paying attention to spelling and vocabulary. Overall there is much awareness of the weak literacy skills of many pupils and encouraging evidence of a school-wide determination to tackle them so that progress made in English can be supported.

13. Standards of numeracy are low. The school, through its focus on securing good standards of behaviour and improving literacy, has made improving numerical skills a priority for the forthcoming year. Most pupils enter the school without the basic number skills expected of 11 year olds and they continue to have difficulty in calculating and in solving problems requiring an understanding of number. Pupils are rarely expected to practise numerical skills in other subjects.
14. There have been significant improvements in the use of information and communication technology across the school since the last inspection. Pupils are developing skill and confidence in the use of a variety of computer applications and this is taking place in an increasing number of subjects. However, in Key Stage 4, as the work is not sufficiently co-ordinated across the school, pupils' skills are not developed systematically enough which results in them being below the level they are capable of achieving. The new GNVQ Intermediate course is providing effectively for those Year 10 pupils following this option.
15. Pupils with special educational needs are generally making good progress in their learning in all subjects. Individual Education Plans provide more effective guidance to teachers and enable work to be set to meet targets in these plans. The school has made considerable progress in this area since the last inspection. A highlight of the new inclusion provision is the 'Spotlight Programme' where pupils are making very good progress. They are, however, making much slower progress in the re-integration programme.
16. Since the last inspection, the school is maintaining standards at Key Stage 3 and making better progress at Key Stage 4. It has improved on already good standards in dance and drama and is improving provision in music. In most subjects, there has been some improvement since the last inspection and this has been particularly marked in English at Key Stage 4. The school is successful in building on the very low levels of attainment on entry. Pupils have, in the past, made slower progress in Years 7 - 9 but there is evidence that the current Year 7 are making satisfactory progress in almost all lessons and good progress in six out of ten lessons. The focus on literacy is having a marked impact on pupils' ability to express themselves and to understand the tasks and challenges they are set. Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved significantly since the last inspection. The school has set itself appropriately challenging targets and is on course to meet and possibly exceed them in GCSE examinations. It must, however, make significant improvements in pupils' attendance if it is to achieve these targets.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Overall, the attitudes, values and personal development of pupils are good and show a significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils respond well to the opportunities offered to them and live and work together in a comfortable atmosphere.
18. Most pupils have good attitudes to learning. They show interest in their work, concentrate well and apply themselves to the tasks set readily. Many pupils come to lessons with positive attitudes and a willingness to learn. They ask and answer questions, join in discussions and contribute well during lessons. Most pupils are good-humoured and relaxed. They are generally enthusiastic about lessons, particularly in drama and physical education. For example, in a Year 9 drama lesson, pupils were putting together a documentary style presentation on missing pupils. They tackled their work with great enthusiasm, creativity and gusto. Their work was full of humour and individuality. In physical education, Year 11 pupils responded well to the challenges facing them in basketball and Year 7 worked very well in pairs in gymnastics.
19. However, there is a small number of pupils in each year group whose attitudes in lessons are not good. Where lessons were not sufficiently challenging (in a Year 9 French lesson for example) or where they were too teacher-directed as happened in a Year 9 science lesson on the characteristics of living things, pupils lost concentration and sometimes became cheeky. A few teachers did not control unsatisfactory behaviour well and this resulted in pupils being able to

disrupt the lesson and stop other pupils from learning. The low expectations in some Year 10 mathematics lessons resulted in some pupils not being engaged in their learning.

20. The behaviour of the majority of pupils around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils were involved in drawing up the classroom code and consider it to be fair. Pupils are supportive of one another in lessons, often helping and complementing each other naturally. They socialise well outside the classroom and the atmosphere is good-humoured. Anti-bullying is given a high priority in tutorial time, assemblies and personal and social education lessons. Pupils report there is some bullying but most feel they can go to someone for help and it will be resolved. Pupils have developed a stronger sense of loyalty towards the school since the last inspection and there is very little litter, graffiti or vandalism.
21. During the last academic year, there were no permanent exclusions and 85 fixed term exclusions involving 61 students. Although this is still high, the number of exclusions is significantly lower than reported in the last inspection and is decreasing each year. The exclusion figure is lower than the current average for schools in areas 3 and 4 in Hampshire. Exclusions are the final stage in a clear, structured approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour and are not a sanction that is used lightly. The school is working hard with some pupils to help them manage their own behaviour. All exclusions are fully documented. Parents are involved at all stages and generally support the school's approach and methods.
22. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are good and create a supportive and caring atmosphere. These good relationships have a positive impact on pupils' response and attitudes in lessons. Pupils are valued both as individuals and for their contribution to the daily life of school, as can be seen by the way in which the staff, prefects and year councils work together. Pupils respect each other's feelings and are willing to listen to opinions different from their own. They work well in groups. Discussions in personal and social education and religious education lessons were often lively, and illustrated pupils' acceptance and tolerance of others well. For example, Year 10 pupils considered the question of why it might be important to establish a holocaust memorial day and showed a lot of respect for holocaust victims. Pupils are polite and friendly and enjoy having visitors to their school and lessons.
23. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to take on responsibility within school. Pupils are elected from each tutor group to meet with the heads of year to discuss pupils' concerns and the school council meets every half term. Recently, pupils have met with representatives of the catering service to discuss the dining service. They have considered proposals for a Peace Garden and how to build links with the elderly people in their local community. Older pupils show a genuine concern over such issues as insufficient equipment for the Media Group and the pressure on computers after school. Pupils are nominated as prefects in Year 11 and they have duties around the school at breaks which help to promote an orderly atmosphere. Older pupils help younger pupils through schemes such as Buddy Readers and by taking a prominent part in many of the after-school clubs. When given the opportunity, pupils enjoy and respond well to using their initiative and being independent. For example, in drama lessons pupils are given creative freedom and produce some interesting, individual and high quality work.
24. Attendance at the school is unsatisfactory and there has been no significant improvement since the last inspection despite the best efforts of the school. The attendance rate is consistently around 87 per cent, which is well below the national average, and in no year group does the rate rise above 90 per cent. In the current academic year, 47 per cent of pupils have attendance less than 90 per cent which is having a serious effect on their levels of attainment and on their progress. Conversely, the attendance of those pupils in Spotlight is very good and these pupils are making good progress as a direct result of following a curriculum that is suited to their needs. Unfortunately, pupils in the reintegration unit do not improve their attendance.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

25. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good or better in six out of ten lessons and very good or excellent in a fifth of all lessons. Unsatisfactory teaching is now rare. The school has gained much from its focus on 'success for all', setting high expectations,

improving planning and promoting consistency of practice. These improvements are due to the emphasis that the school has placed on developing strategies for improving teaching and learning, the sharing of good practice, the appointment of new teachers to the school, more effective tracking of pupils' performance and progress and the school's systems for targeting support on individuals. Most teachers are providing a secure framework in which pupils can learn and make progress. The school has set high standards of behaviour for pupils and created an environment in which they can learn. It has addressed successfully the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. Since the last inspection the percentage of satisfactory or better teaching has increased from 72 per cent to 97 per cent.

26. Teaching is good overall at both key stages. At Key Stage 3, 97 per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better, 61 per cent is good or very good and 18 per cent is very good or excellent. At Key Stage 4, 95 per cent of the teaching is at least satisfactory, with just under two-thirds good or better. Slightly less than a quarter of the teaching at this key stage is very good. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs in just 4 per cent of lessons overall and these are spread across the two key stages.
27. Although there are some differences between the key stages, the teaching is very good or excellent in dance and drama; good overall in English, science, history, music, physical education and the 'Spotlight Programme'; and satisfactory in art, information and communication technology, business studies, in the GNVQ Intermediate course, and in personal, social and health education lessons. At Key Stage 3, teaching is best in Year 7 where 70 per cent of lessons are good or better. In Key Stage 4, three quarters of all lessons are good and one quarter very good. The quality of teaching on work-related learning programmes is satisfactory and occasionally good. Teachers involved prepare the lessons carefully to course requirements and have good relationships with pupils. There are regular meetings with college staff to monitor pupil performance on link courses. Pupils generally respond well and take pride in completion of work sheets and certificates achieved. They appreciate the relevance of the work they are doing and this helps maintain the interest and motivation of most. Not all pupils attend regularly. The greatest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching occurs in French.
28. There are many examples of excellent teaching in the performing arts. A Year 8 group demonstrated their understanding of text and subtext through writing and devised performance in differing genres. This excellent lesson was underpinned by detailed planning which matched the range of tasks to the abilities of the pupils and very high expectations of behaviour and of the analytical skills which pupils were expected to display. A lesson on Jazz dance enabled two teachers to demonstrate excellent team teaching strategies with a combined Year 7 group. Very effective planning, excellent subject knowledge and excellent modelling enabled pupils to reinforce their knowledge and to make very good progress on sequences. Where teaching is very good, pupils make particularly good progress in their learning and achieve high standards. Some very good teaching occurs at times in many subjects, including English, science, history, music, physical education and PSE.
29. The school's recent development work has been very effective in helping teachers to use the following strategies consistently and well. They plan and structure the work thoroughly to ensure that time in lessons is not wasted, set out clearly and share with pupils the learning intentions of the lesson, and provide a variety of tasks to challenge and stimulate pupils' thinking and help them learn. In the better lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge very effectively to ensure that the work is pitched at an appropriately challenging level and make very good use of open-ended questioning to explore pupils' understanding and to make them reflect and think more critically. A feature of the most successful teaching is the way that teachers link current work with that undertaken in previous lessons, develop and build on pupils' ideas, giving them time to reflect on and clarify their ideas, and the way that they relate the work to pupils' own experiences and to everyday life. This last feature ensures that pupils have a context in which to place their learning, enabling them to engage more effectively in the tasks as they see a relevance to what they are doing.
30. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs by subject teachers, and when they are withdrawn for small group or individual work with the special educational needs department, is good

overall. The majority of teachers use the pupils' individual education plans effectively to provide them with appropriate work but practice is not sufficiently consistent across the school. Learning support assistants provide satisfactory support to individual pupils in class but, in many instances, they are insufficiently aware of the work to be undertaken in the lesson and, consequently, the help they provide is not adequately focused in all cases. Although there are examples of effective practice, some subject teachers do not involve the learning support assistants enough in the planning of the work or in sharing the learning intentions of the lesson. When pupils are withdrawn for additional support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, the teaching, although satisfactory in the main, frequently lacks enough challenge and some of the work fails to meet the pupils' specific needs or to motivate and enthuse them. In such instances, pupils make insufficient progress in extending their knowledge, understanding and skills.

31. The weaknesses in the small number of lessons that were less than satisfactory are due mainly to the use of a very narrow range of teaching strategies and low expectations of what children can do. They stem mainly from weaknesses in lesson planning, unclear purposes to the lesson and to the tasks being undertaken and poor skills in managing some pupils' behaviour, which, in these lessons, was disruptive and affected the learning of a most pupils in these classes. In addition, some of the teaching in these lessons is characterised by a limited range of teaching approaches, focusing too heavily on individual pupils to the exclusion of the class as a whole, a lack of challenge in the activities provided and work that does not meet the needs of individual pupils sufficiently. This was evident in a few French lessons.
32. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good. In the most successful lessons, they use this knowledge effectively to provide work to stimulate, motivate and challenge their pupils. Other than in art at Key Stage 4 and modern foreign languages overall where it is generally unsatisfactory, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are good or very good. In the best teaching, teachers expect pupils to learn and to apply creative and intellectual effort to their work and they instil high standards of accuracy, including the correct use of technical language, and focus strongly on developing pupils' literacy skills. This focus on developing basic skills was particularly successful in a Year 9 English lesson, which involved mainly pupils with poor literacy skills. Teachers are very consistent and effective in supporting the development of literacy skills. Most lessons provide pupils with key words and explanations for technical terms and great care is taken to reinforce the importance of accurate understanding and usage. Writing frames are used well in history to help pupils extend their explanations from explaining a sequence of events to offering reasons for why these events had occurred.
33. Most lessons are carefully planned and have clear purposes to ensure that pupils acquire and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding in a systematic way. Planning is generally good in all subjects, with the exception of art, modern foreign languages and geography. Most teachers use an extensive range of teaching and organisational strategies, appropriate to the subject and to the content being covered, in order to interest pupils and ensure that they remain on task, are productive and make good progress. In the majority of lessons, teachers maintain a brisk pace to ensure that the time in lessons is used effectively to maintain pupils' concentration and motivation. They also use a good range of resources to support pupils' learning.
34. Nearly all teachers have established good relationships with their pupils and, in the vast majority of lessons, manage their behaviour well through making their expectations clear and ensuring that pupils respond appropriately. Teachers praise and encourage pupils and give them constructive and positive feedback on their performance in order to help them understand what they need to do to improve their work. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress is good in nearly all subjects. In modern foreign languages and information and communication technology, it is unsatisfactory overall, as work is marked infrequently and there is no system for tracking attainment in information and communication technology across the curriculum. Marking is mostly undertaken regularly, although not with a common approach across subjects. In the best marking, pupils benefit from constructive, diagnostic comments and clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. They get very focused support to improve literacy in English. Homework is set regularly for the most part, although not always according to the homework timetable, and is generally effective in supporting, extending and enhancing class work.

35. Other than in art, modern foreign languages and in information and communication technology across the curriculum, where they are generally making satisfactory progress, pupils are making good progress in deepening, broadening and applying their knowledge, understanding and skills. Most pupils are keen to learn and concentrate well during lessons, which ensures that they make good gains in their learning. In most but not all instances, they are working to their capacity because of the demands that teachers make on them. In some lessons, the failure to match the work to the varied needs of pupils, even within setted groups, results in some of the higher attaining pupils, in particular, making insufficient progress.
36. The school has made an excellent start to considering the educational needs of its gifted and talented pupils and has begun a detailed exercise to draw up a register of gifted and talented pupils. Teachers have individual learning plans for the pupils who have been identified to date. Some of these pupils attend summer schools and local competitions and events organised by the school to which other schools are invited to send participants. The programme of events is detailed and effective in raising expectations and aspirations. Work has also commenced on revising schemes of work to set appropriate challenges for gifted and talented pupils. In the school, promoting individual excellence is a strength within the performing arts, history and English.

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

37. The curriculum provided for pupils is generally broad, relevant and matched to the needs of individual pupils. The school is participating fully in the local Education Action Zone 'Partners on the Park' and has adopted an innovative approach to curriculum design and delivery, particularly at Key Stage 4. The new curriculum offer, introduced in this academic year, has been carefully planned and negotiated with parents, governors and other members in the Zone. The governing body has approved plans for the disapplication of the National Curriculum for identified groups of pupils. The school has followed requirements for seeking approval through the Zone forum and the DfEE. The curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 is matched to the needs abilities and aspirations of individual pupils. It has been designed to have a significant impact on the low levels of attainment in the basic skills and to meet the needs of the many pupils with special educational needs. Early indications are that there is some improvement on achievement in lessons but, with the exception of the Spotlight programme, there has been no significant improvement in attendance. It is too early to judge the impact of the new curriculum pattern on progress and attainment.
38. In Year 7, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to the full range of National Curriculum subjects, as well as drama, dance and a personal and social education course. A significant cohort are disapplied from modern foreign languages from Year 8 to spend more time on literacy. At Key Stage 4, a choice of subjects ensures greater variety to meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of the pupils. All pupils follow a programme including English, science, mathematics, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education. Pupils choose either resistant materials or food technology. The remainder of the programme is composed of two optional subjects and one course from modern foreign languages, physical education or the ASDAN youth award. Most pupils enter GCSE examinations, although there is an increasing number of achievement certificates and vocational programmes available, particularly for some of the lower attaining pupils. Work-related learning programmes are appropriate and satisfactory for selected disapplied pupils, all of whom are of low ability and many of whom have special educational needs. There is a range of courses for pupils in Years 8-11 eg ASDAN Key Steps, ASDAN Youth Award, Basic Health and Safety Certificate, ASDAN Key Decisions, NVQ 1, with the time increasing from one lesson per week in Year 8 to the equivalent of three subjects' lessons in years 10/11. All courses are accredited; varying from internal certificates for some, to working towards nationally accredited courses for senior pupils NVQ 1.
39. The GNVQ Intermediate award is available in information and communication technology. There are effective strategies for teaching literacy and, to support numeracy, a useful booklet has been developed to guide teachers in all subjects. Planning supports the curriculum well. It is most effective in subjects such as English, history and the performing arts and least effective in modern

foreign languages, where elements of the National Curriculum programme of study are not effectively taught.

40. The total curriculum time is in line with nationally recommended figures. The time allocated for subjects is broadly in line with the national averages but is not sufficient for performing arts, particularly at Key Stage 3, or for RE. The carousel arrangement for performing arts does not enable pupils to develop continuity of experience and expertise. There is insufficient time in both key stages to enable delivery of the agreed syllabus for religious education. During the week of the inspection, pupils generally moved around the school efficiently but there was some lateness to lessons, particularly in mathematics.
41. Within the school's overall curricular provision, there are some deficiencies. Although statutory requirements with regard to information and communication technology are met at Key Stages 3, there is insufficient provision across the curriculum at Key Stage 4 to ensure that all elements of the programmes of study are undertaken in the appropriate depth. Weaknesses exist in modern foreign languages where short-term lesson planning is weak.
42. Since the last inspection, there has been much improvement to the curriculum, such as the introduction of the personal, social and health education programme. Effective co-ordination and staff training have led to the provision of a much improved and better delivered programme. Several additions, such as the able pupils' programme, the ASDAN Youth Award scheme and a variety of initiatives aimed at preparing students for their future careers have enhanced the curriculum. The governors' curriculum committee meets regularly to oversee the curriculum. Its members are well informed and contribute very well to curriculum debate. They visit departments and are fully involved in decisions concerning issues such as the new curriculum pattern.
43. The provision for extra-curricular opportunities is very good and pupils benefit from an extensive programme, which complements, extends and enhances the curriculum. The provision for performing arts is excellent, with high levels of participation in the school productions. There are, however, few opportunities for performing in music. Competitive sport is well provided for, with teams in the major sports for both boys and girls. Exchange visits abroad to France develop language skills and awareness of other cultures. The able pupils' programme provides enrichment activities, including residential and field trips, science and mathematics challenges. The school also provides a wealth of opportunities through study support, homework clubs and additional preparation and help for examinations.
44. Links with the feeder schools and with sixth form and further education colleges are good overall and benefit the transfer arrangements for pupils. A programme of visits and familiarisation opportunities occur and the school supplements these links with effective communication with parents before pupils transfer to the school. Liaison with the contributory primary schools is very good overall but has not fully engaged departments in planning for continuity and progression across Key Stages 2 and 3. The school has very good links with the community, which makes a very positive contribution to the learning opportunities available to pupils and to their progress and attainment. Community representatives are regular contributors to assemblies.
45. The provision for pupils' personal and social education and careers education and guidance is satisfactory overall and makes a positive contribution to their attitudes, values and personal development. At Key Stages 3 and 4, all pupils follow a carefully designed programme. The programme includes health education, which places appropriate emphasis on sex education and substance abuse. Elements of the sex education programme are also appropriately taught in science. The quality of teaching of the personal and social education programme is usually satisfactory and often good and results in good quality work from the pupils.
46. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. The school operates within a framework of values which regulates behaviour and reinforces positive attitudes. Pupils understand and respond to the rewards and sanctions. The school has created a culture in which achievement is respected and celebrated. The programme of personal and social education makes a significant contribution, as does the work-related dimension of the curriculum with its vocational courses. In Year 11, pupils exercise responsibility as prefects and the school council engages pupils actively

in the process of making decisions. The school helps pupils to learn to distinguish right from wrong and to develop the skills they need in adult life. Further improvement will be achieved when the amount of door-locking can be reduced and the opportunities for trust increased.

47. The school's contribution to pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There are many strengths but also weaknesses. Opportunities are good in English, music, dance and drama. The school productions show that the performing arts are a particular strength. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive but not enough is done in two major areas of the curriculum. The school has not found a way to give all its pupils the opportunity to complete their study of a modern foreign language. Christianity, Islam and Hinduism extend pupils' horizons in religious education but the effect of good teaching and learning is diminished by the shortage of time. The school could do more to prepare pupils for the richness and diversity of life in today's world.
48. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Opportunities occur in English, history, religious education and the performing arts but, in other subject areas and across the curriculum as a whole, pupils are not taught how to reflect on life and its questions from their own experience. Assemblies and tutorial time do not usually include an act of collective worship or the opportunity for silent reflection. The absence of arrangements for collective worship and the shortage of time for religious education deprive pupils of a substantial part of their statutory and educational entitlement. The school knows how to receive and value pupils' ideas but not how to use them to help pupils acquire and develop spiritual awareness and self-knowledge.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49. The school offers very good support for its pupils which is appreciated by parents and pupils alike. This is an area which has improved greatly since the last inspection.
50. The school pays appropriate attention to the physical care and wellbeing of its pupils. There is an effective child protection policy which follows the local authority procedures. A senior member of staff is the designated officer and provides good advice and support for staff and pupils. Good use is made of outside agencies and lines of communication are clear. There are good arrangements for dealing with first aid, sickness and accidents. The school follows clear and detailed guidelines for the organisation and participation of off-site visits and activities, and there are regular checks on fire and electrical equipment. The health and safety policy identifies roles and responsibilities within the school and is regularly reviewed. Risk assessment within the science department is good. In other departments, staff observe safe practice and frequently consider health and safety risks, but the school has not yet implemented a formal and rigorous programme of risk assessments of activities and work practice cross all departments and needs to do so immediately.
51. The school provides very good support and guidance for its pupils and has created a secure and caring environment. Year groups are well led by their heads of year and key stage co-ordinators and tutors take their responsibilities seriously. Tutors and pupils stay together for five years which gives plenty of opportunity to build stable and effective relationships. Teachers and tutors know pupils well individually and have a genuine concern for their progress, welfare and personal wellbeing. Pupils have trust and confidence in their teachers and find them approachable and encouraging. The quality of the relationships is the basis upon which much of the personal support is built and this contributes well to pupils' confidence and attitude to school.
52. The school has worked extremely hard to improve attendance since the last inspection. Appointment of an attendance/welfare officer and the move to a computerised system has improved the monitoring of attendance of individuals, tutor groups, year groups and the whole school. Good attendance is recognised by awards and certificates and every opportunity is taken to inform and involve parents. The importance of regular attendance is continually stressed in the newsletter and parents get a weekly printout of their child's attendance. An attendance panel works with parents and pupils together and referrals made to the education welfare service. Despite these good procedures, the attendance of many pupils is still unsatisfactory. The school needs to widen its thinking to find new strategies to ensure that the attendance of all pupils becomes good.

53. The school has good systems and procedures for encouraging and maintaining good discipline and behaviour. Pupils were involved in forming the classroom code, which is displayed in all rooms. Year 7 pupils are currently reassessing the code with their tutors in tutorial time. The school gives high priority to ensuring that pupils' behaviour around the school is good. Teachers take their supervision duties seriously and senior staff are highly visible around the school all day and especially during the breaks. The reward and sanctions systems have been reviewed since the last inspection and are effective in maintaining good behaviour and attitudes. The Spotlight programme is successfully helping some pupils who have difficult behaviour problems and the number of exclusions is falling each year. A record is kept of all behaviour incidents through Brom Com. Any incident racist in nature is recorded separately and these are also reducing in number. Staff show a lot of respect for their pupils and for each other which contributes strongly towards the calm and friendly atmosphere within the school.
54. There are very good systems to support pupils' personal and academic development. The half-termly assessments keep pupils aware of the progress they are making and remind them of the target levels or grades they are aiming for. Most pupils use their homework planners well and this is helping them to be more organised. The size of the tutor groups has been reduced so that tutors are able to monitor and support pupils better. Most tutors use the tutorial time very effectively. For example, Year 7 pupils are currently reviewing the classroom code and Year 8 pupils have been giving 5-minute presentations about their favourite hobby to the rest of their group. Through the personal, social and health education programme, pupils are beginning to develop an understanding of the world at large and a better understanding of themselves and the role they can play in society. Teachers have in-depth knowledge of all their pupils and they communicate well with each other. This plays an important part in the on-going process of monitoring the overall progress of pupils through the year. Those pupils with particular behavioural, social or academic problems are well supported through the school's flexibility and willingness to adapt the curriculum to meet individual needs and trial new projects. The school also organises mentors from outside to work alongside pupils and offer support and advice. Such initiatives have a significant and positive effective on pupils' attitudes, achievements, self-belief and aspirations.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

55. The school has maintained the positive partnership with parents reported in the last inspection and is constantly looking for ways to develop the relationship further.
56. Parents are positive about the school. They feel that the school sets high expectations for its pupils and that pupils make good progress. Parents feel that the school offers a good range of extra activities for pupils to enjoy and they also find staff are approachable and helpful.
57. Parents receive a good range of information about the school and its philosophy and approach. The prospectus is professional, attractive, informative and readable. It gives an accurate picture of the school and what parents can expect. The governors' annual report is also interesting and gives parents a good insight into the activities of the school. The Weekly Reporter and Park Post provide very good up-to-date information for parents on forthcoming events and keep current issues, such as the importance of good attendance, firmly in the forefront. Park Life - the school's newspaper - is a genuine celebration of pupils' achievements and activities. It is full of photographs and articles, many written by pupils themselves, and gives a genuine snapshot of life at school. The 'Moving Up' booklet for pupils and parents coming into Year 7 is practical and clearly explains the school's philosophy and approach to behaviour and homework. When possible, events and achievements are acknowledged in the local newspaper giving pupils the recognition they deserve. This raises the profile of the school within the community and gives pupils and parents a sense of pride in their school. There are many photographs of pupils around the school in eye-catching displays for all to see.
58. Formal reporting of pupils' progress to parents is through two parents' evenings each year and a report each term in Key Stage 3 (except core subjects which are reported half termly) and each half term in Key Stage 4. The half-termly assessment reports show the national curriculum level or GCSE grade that pupils are currently achieving and also the target level or grade that the pupil is expected to reach. Grades are also given for classwork and homework. These reports give a good

overview of how pupils are doing and parents can compare term to term. Once a year, there is a more detailed report with written comments for each subject. Levels and grades are again given but there is no comparison with either a target level or grade or a national average to give parents an understanding of how well their child is doing compared to others. The comments by subject staff are personal and detailed but relate more to pupils' attitudes towards their work rather than giving a clear picture of what they can and cannot do. Whilst targets are set, they often refer to attitudes of pupils rather than giving practical and helpful suggestions for how pupils can improve particular aspects of their work.

59. The school works hard to encourage parents to take an active part in their child's education. Tutors and year heads stay with the same group through the years, which gives parents a stable point of contact. This results in good relationships between teachers and parents, and parents appreciate the readiness of staff to see them. The attendance at parents' evenings is improving and parents are encouraged to make an alternative appointment if they cannot on the particular date. The school works with some families together through meeting parents and pupils at the same time. This is helping those parents cope with their children at home better and provides constructive ways in which parents can work alongside and support the school. Over recent years, the school has run family literacy groups and met with parents to give them a better understanding of homework in mathematics. The school sought parents' views on the problem of bullying and used their opinions to review their policies and procedures. A small but committed group of parents continued to work closely with the school through checking the replies in the bullying box and reviewing the reported cases of bullying. Parents now trust the school to sort out any bullying issues quickly and appropriately. Parents play an active part on the governing body and feel their views are well represented.
60. The school seeks and genuinely wants parents' good opinion. It appreciates parents' comments and acts on their views. Parents want their children to attend the school and places are regularly oversubscribed. This is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to school and to their learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. The school is led and managed very well. The headteacher, governors and senior management team play a key role in determining the educational direction of the work of the school, particularly in relation to promoting high standards and good behaviour. Senior managers have complementary skills and together convey a sense of purpose and a clear commitment to improving standards and the quality of education within the school. There is a good delegation to staff with management responsibilities and, in most instances, there is effective follow-up to ensure tasks are completed well. Staff have a shared commitment towards providing the best possible opportunities for pupils to learn and develop. The school's aims of promoting achievement ('Success for all'), concern, respect and involvement in the school and the community, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility are evident in many aspects of its work. Pupils are proud of the school and there is a clear sense of corporate identity and shared purpose. The quality of leadership and management is a strength of the school.
62. The school is a leading partner in the local Education Action Zone, 'Partners on the Park'. It is using the opportunities provided through the Zone, very effectively, to plan and provide an innovative curriculum model. The school promotes equality for its pupils through teaching and learning opportunities which are tailored to the needs of individuals. Care is taken to guide pupils along appropriate curriculum routes. In its efforts to provide a range of opportunities for pupils, full access to all elements of the curriculum is not always achieved. Some pupils lose their entitlement to modern foreign languages, particularly in Key Stage 4. In some subjects, for example, English, modern foreign languages and history, girls perform better than boys. The school's policy on equal opportunities is embedded in the roles and responsibilities of senior managers and the school has taken a leading role in promoting positive attitudes both in school and in the community. Teachers deal sensitively, but firmly, with any examples of biased behaviour or prejudiced comments. There is insufficient use of displays and other resources to raise pupils' awareness of life in an ethnically diverse society.
63. The governing body undertakes its role in the governance of the school effectively and plays an

influential role in its strategic management. Governors are strongly committed to the school and are highly supportive of the headteacher and senior management team with whom they have good relationships. They have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and, through their working practices, are effective in holding the school to account for the standards and quality of education it achieves. They are helped in this work by the good quality of the reports and other information they receive from staff in the school, which enable governors to gain a clear oversight and understanding. The governing body meets nearly all of its statutory responsibilities well, but, as identified in the last inspection report, it does not yet meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

64. The school monitors and evaluates its performance very effectively. The analysis and use of performance data in identifying strengths and weaknesses, especially in relation to pupils' progress and achievements and, as a consequence, departmental and teaching performance, are particularly effective. The school is less effective in consistently addressing areas of weakness. The direct monitoring and evaluation of teaching occurs, both by senior managers and by heads of department, in a systematic and rigorous manner. Senior staff take appropriate action where there are weaknesses in teaching or in departmental performance. Subject managers lead and manage their departments well in most cases, but there are some weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching in geography and modern foreign languages. There are clear and effective systems in place for reviewing the performance of teachers.
65. The school is very clear about its priorities and targets. It makes good use of data from the standardised tests to set targets for pupils and for the school as a whole. There are particularly thorough systems in the school to monitor the progress of individual pupils and to compare the school's performance against that of other schools and against its past performance. Development planning to address the identified priorities is firmly embedded into the school's systems and staff and governors are fully involved in their identification and in the processes of planning. Departmental and other development plans include objectives, timescales, resources, in-service training requirements and success criteria. There is rigorous monitoring of these plans by departments and senior managers.
66. The match between the number of staff, their qualifications and teaching experience is very good. There are generally sufficient special educational needs support staff to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. In modern foreign languages, the foreign language assistant is not used effectively. Administrative and clerical staff are sufficient to meet the school's needs and they make a positive contribution to the smooth running of the school. The amount and range of staff in-service training is clearly focused and is good. The induction of new staff and newly qualified teachers is effective. Initial teacher training students are well supported through an appropriate programme of experiences and the mentoring arrangements.
67. The school has good accommodation to meet the demands of the curriculum. In some subjects, the accommodation is very good. However, there are some poor elements, such as the changing areas, where the shower accommodation is not appropriate for the needs of growing adolescents. Dance is taught in a school dining hall where there is considerable disruption to lessons before and after breaks as staff prepare to serve food. In addition, the floor is inappropriate for the teaching of dance and limits pupils' attainment and progress. Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. The library provides good accommodation for independent work and research. Outdoor areas are good and include hard courts, grassed pitches and a running track. Office and staff accommodation are also very good. The accommodation is used effectively and, in some cases, makes a significant positive impact on the pupils' learning. Standards of cleaning, caretaking and decoration are good and there is little evidence of litter or graffiti around the site.
68. The school has a good range of resources to meet the needs of the curriculum and to support pupils' learning. The provision for information and communication technology has improved since the last inspection, with the number of computers now close to the national average. These resources are not, however, readily available to be used by departments. There is a programme of refurbishment and re-equipping science laboratories leading to much improved provision.

69. The school library, which has a wide-ranging stock of fiction and non-fiction books, provides scope for individual research and other forms of independent learning, as well as opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy skills and to gain access to other information through the use of CD-ROMs and the Internet. It is well used, particularly before and after school.
70. Strategic planning and financial management are very good. The school uses its resources prudently, based on very good, realistic financial planning. The governors contribute significantly to the planning process by maintaining a strategic overview and bringing to discussions a wide range of relevant experience and expertise. Financial planning is effective at school and departmental levels and the school's educational priorities inform budget setting. Priorities are clearly identified and correspond with the school's current needs. There is a close link between educational and financial planning and specific proposals are costed appropriately. Priorities are related to raising standards of attainment.
71. Systems of financial control are good. There is an appropriate degree of liaison between the headteacher, senior management team, heads of department, the Administrative Officer and governors. Financial information is readily available and reports are analysed regularly by the headteacher and the chair of finance, as well as being presented to meetings of the full governing body. Financial procedures are well established and controls are operated with a high degree of efficiency. The most recent auditors' report in 2000 concluded that financial administration is sound and all of the recommendations have been addressed.
72. Suitable procedures are in place to ensure that the school obtains best value for money before committing itself to expenditure. Assessments are made of the cost effectiveness of proposed expenditure and the senior management team and governors give appropriate emphasis to evaluating the subsequent impact of the expenditure they have approved and its effects on the policies they have agreed.
73. Funds are appropriately devolved to departments and there is an innovation fund to promote curriculum development. These funds are sufficient to enable departments to operate effectively. The use of funding for staff development is decided through the application of criteria and informed by targets set for individual staff. The school carefully accounts for the funds and grants it receives and, in all cases, they are used for the purposes designated.
74. Overall, the school makes good use of its staffing, accommodation and other resources. Pupils benefit greatly from the efficient way that staff and rooms are deployed, so that they gain the full advantage of specialist teaching and accommodation. The school uses its resources to good effect to support pupils' learning and expenditure is concentrated on meeting educational needs rather than on superficial trappings. Day-to-day administration is unobtrusive but efficient and enables the school to achieve its ends with the minimum expenditure of time and resources. Overall, in terms of its level of expenditure and the high quality of education provided, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75. In order to raise standards of attainment and improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and other staff need to:

- (a) Work with schools across the Education Action Zone to raise levels of pupil attendance; (paragraphs 1, 24, 37, 52, 103, 128, 131)
- (b) Improve further the quality of curriculum planning and provision to ensure consistent high expectations are shared by pupils and staff. Priority should be given to raising standards in:
- modern foreign languages;
 - art and design;
 - information and communication technology across the curriculum; and
 - geography;

and improving provision for:

- religious education; and
- pupils' spiritual development across the curriculum.

(paragraphs 4, 7, 9, 10, 14, 31, 33, 35, 38, 48, 99, 122, 123, 126, 136, 138, 140, 141, 142, 144, 163, 164, 166, 167, 168)

- (c) Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning to embed high expectations in all lessons. Priority should be given to:
- engaging pupils in work which enables them to demonstrate greater depth of knowledge, skills and understanding, independence in learning and thought, and in work which develops their skills of analysis; and
 - improving pupils' attainment in numeracy across the curriculum.

(paragraphs 1, 10, 13, 19, 31, 35, 36, 80, 84, 85, 96, 98, 104, 106, 108, 112, 123, 125, 129, 142, 144, 149, 153, 165)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	181
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	16	42	36	2	1	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	836	0
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	211	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	479	0

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	10.7
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	2.2
National comparative data	0.4

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
	2000	72	72	144

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	22	22	19
	Girls	38	31	13
	Total	60	53	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	42 (37)	37 (42)	23 (25)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	8 (9)	16 (18)	3 (3)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	22	33	20
	Girls	31	46	25
	Total	53	79	145
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	37 (39)	55 (48)	32 (40)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	10 (10)	21 (25)	7 (16)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	76	72	148

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	12	59	71
	Girls	14	63	71
	Total	26	122	142
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	18 (17)	82 (77)	96 (88)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	25
	National	38.4

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	8	100
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	833
Any other minority ethnic group	0

(Unclassified - 9)

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	53.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	592

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.8
Key Stage 4	22.6

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	60	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2,285,038
Total expenditure	2,288,539
Expenditure per pupil	2,781
Balance brought forward from previous year	16,455
Balance carried forward to next year	12,954

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

836

Number of questionnaires returned

81

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	37	19	10	2
My child is making good progress in school.	37	46	7	7	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	42	21	7	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	44	20	17	1
The teaching is good.	30	46	12	1	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	40	16	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	37	9	2	7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	43	0	4	5
The school works closely with parents.	21	51	16	6	6
The school is well led and managed.	21	53	9	6	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	46	15	4	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	44	3	1	13

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

ENGLISH

76. Standards of attainment in English are below average at ages 14 and 16, but this judgement represents good achievement given pupils' well below average attainment on entry and performance in Year 9 national tests. Although results in Year 9 tests and GCSE English have remained well below average up to 2000, there are pleasing indications of a rising trend in GCSE results since 1998 (including predicted grades for the current Year 11). The recent strong focus on teaching and learning in this very well led department has resulted in standards now being higher than at the last inspection.
77. In work seen during the inspection, pupils in Year 7 to 9 have many opportunities to learn about and practise speaking and listening, reading and writing in different ways and for different audiences. As a result, a substantial minority make good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. They are able to identify different writing styles, know the key words for naming parts of speech and writing and understand some of the techniques writers use, for example to create tension. They are developing a richer vocabulary which the more able use successfully to express their meaning clearly in speech and writing. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs also make good gains in reading and in developing a structure for their writing as a result of the support given to the skills during Years 7 to 9. Despite these gains, many pupils have difficulties with spelling and sentence punctuation. Their lack of vocabulary limits clear expression in speech and writing and the poor handwriting of some affects their ability to write at length. These weaknesses keep standards of attainment below average overall.
78. In work seen during the inspection, pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to improve their reading skills and are able to cope more confidently with the reading demands of set texts. Higher attainers can write at length, use information effectively and adapt their language style appropriately to suit the context. Their personal or creative writing is often lively and imaginative. Pupils gain important understanding of media concepts in their GCSE English and media studies courses. They can identify significant aspects of character, relationships and themes. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs are able to write at some length and choose an appropriate style. Speaking and listening skills are average. Many pupils continue to have difficulties, however, with sustaining clear written expression and with spelling and sentence punctuation. A small proportion continues to have substantially below average reading skills. These weaknesses also appear in the work of higher attaining pupils and depress standards of attainment overall.
79. In English, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils usually listen with interest, participate well in group activities and work hard. They respond particularly well when teachers provide stimulating material and opportunities for them to contribute actively to the lesson. This was the case, for example, in a Year 7 class when the teacher's choice of "Blackberry Picking" by Seamus Heaney provided a clear focus of interest and enabled pupils to learn about choice of words and their definition. Similarly, in a Year 11 class, the teacher's use of Van Gogh reproductions stimulated discussion and attention to detail, with the result that pupils worked hard to refine the quality of their own descriptive writing. Occasionally, attitudes slipped when a teacher did not attend quickly enough to lapses in attention or concentration. Standards of behaviour are good, with only occasional lapses arising from a teacher's inexperience in the management of pupils. Pupils respond well to the opportunities offered for pair and group work. They are particularly responsive to teachers' light touches of humour, which develop and consolidate good relationships.
80. The quality of teaching is good overall. Learning also is good overall, reflecting closely the quality of teaching in each key stage. Apparent in much of the teaching is a conscious concern to raise standards. This is achieved by carefully planned work with a clear purpose and structured activities, high expectations for good behaviour and achievement, well chosen resources, good feedback and use of praise and other rewards, sensitive management of pupils and care for individual development, including those pupils with special educational needs and the more able. Typical of such lessons was a teacher's work with a Year 7 class which began with an effective

review of pupils' knowledge, set them a challenge to complete a difficult task on style in Ian Strachan's account of "Journey of 1000 Miles" and finished with a group presentation of the results of their analysis. As a result, pupils acquired new knowledge of vocabulary, developed understanding of style and gained confidence in speaking clearly and accurately in public. They attained at a level above expectations. Similarly, in a Year 11 class, a teacher's good planning carried the lesson through a series of activities designed to improve the range of vocabulary which pupils could use in persuasive or argumentative writing. She gave good feedback that helped pupils identify important features of language use and expected a serious contribution from pupils. Her good relationships with pupils were evident in the humour she brought to the occasion. As a result, pupils responded positively, worked hard and gained confidence in their ability to cope with the demands of such writing. On occasion, teachers misjudged the level of difficulty of material, or failed to include sufficiently all pupils in their questioning, or mismanaged the organisation and distribution of groups, or mistimed lessons. As a result, some pupils became inattentive or failed to participate fully, the pace of learning was slowed and pupils were unable to review or consolidate their learning. Such occasions were infrequent and usually arose from inexperience.

81. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection in October 1996. Although current attainment standards are below average, they are higher than at that time and all pupils are making good progress in relation to their prior attainment. The quality of teaching has improved and is now usually good and sometimes very good. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved and they are gaining confidence in their ability to achieve higher standards. Much of this improvement arises from the very good leadership of the head of department. Her support for literacy development, use of assessment information, knowledge about teaching and learning strategies and clear sense of the importance of continuing to improve the consistency in quality of teaching are helping the department raise standards and giving it the capacity to improve further in the future.

MATHEMATICS

82. In the 2000 National Tests at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in mathematics showed an overall slight improvement from the previous year, with the results for boys falling below those for girls. The results, however, continue to fall well below the national average for the age group and well below those in similar schools. Teacher assessments for 2000 reflected the test results closely. In the past three years, pupils' attainment in mathematics in Key Stage 3 has consistently bettered their attainment in science but, other than in 1999, failed to match that for English in terms of the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above.
83. In the mathematics GCSE examinations of 2000, the proportion of pupils who achieved grades A*-C, at 11 per cent, showed an improvement over last year but fell well below both the results found in schools nationally and those in similar schools. The results for this year fell below the school's target. The 1999 GCSE average points score for mathematics showed an increase over earlier years but fell back to the 1997 level in the most recent, 2000, examinations. Girls normally had better results than boys, although this was reversed in 2000. The proportion of pupils obtaining A*-C in mathematics was below that of both English and science.
84. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is below the national average, with a small number of pupils attaining in line with expectations. Teacher assessment for the present Year 9 cohort is optimistic in terms of the likely outcome of end of Key Stage Tests. Higher attaining pupils can, for example, demonstrate a sound grasp of terminology and concepts involved when discussing graphical representations of inequalities. Pupils of average attainment are able to construct linear graphs proficiently, having first to decide on appropriate scales and then use the graphs to extract data. Lower attaining pupils, undertaking similar work, confidently plotted lines, having determined the co-ordinate pairs for points on a graph. Pupils with special educational need, who are included in teaching groups of all abilities, achieve in line with their peers, even in the absence of support staff. They are often, however, a source of disruption.
85. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment continues to be below the national average but with a larger number of pupils attaining in line with expectations. Teacher assessment for the present Year 11 cohort provides a broadly accurate evaluation of the likely outcome of the 2001 GCSE examination. Higher attaining pupils, for example, investigated trigonometric functions for angles

greater than 90° and were consistent in their use of positive and negative signs. The work was well matched to their ability. Pupils of average attainment knew the percentage values for most common fractions and were able to use this information to deal with more complex examples. Lower attaining pupils coped well with problems involving speed, distance and time and employed the mnemonic SDT triangle to good effect. Again, pupils with special educational need are to be found in all teaching sets and mostly achieve in line with their peers. There was no appreciable gender difference in attainment in mathematics in either key stage.

86. Since the last inspection, the mathematics department has made significant improvements. The quality of teaching at both key stages has improved and the planning of lessons and match to the needs of pupils is good. Systems for behaviour control are well structured and comprehensive and, when consistently applied, have a positive effect on behaviour and learning.
87. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching in the overwhelming majority of lessons seen was at least satisfactory and, in over 60 per cent, it was good. Where teaching was good, lessons displayed thorough planning linked to past work and teachers able to target their interventions by knowing pupils individually and by name. Unsatisfactory teaching occurred where there was a breakdown in discipline and the teacher was unable to regain the pupils' interest or attention. At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching in the vast majority of lessons seen was good or better. In the best lessons, teachers had established very good rapport with the pupils who responded by showing a positive attitude to their work and with minimal disruptive behaviour.
88. At Key Stage 3, the quality of learning in 70 per cent of lessons seen was at least satisfactory, with a small proportion good. In the best lessons, a quick fire summary of earlier work led smoothly into a new topic. High teacher expectation and a lively pace, with frequent changes of activity and focus, ensured a positive outcome. In lessons where the quality of learning was unsatisfactory or poor, pupils received an unchanging diet. The resulting restlessness was such that the pace of work fell and pupils came increasingly off task. In both key stages, pupils' progress in mathematics is hampered by their lack of confidence in dealing with simple computations.
89. The department is well led and applies a very effective system for monitoring pupils' attainment and progress. This helps to place pupils in teaching sets but has little influence on curriculum planning. Curriculum maps ensure appropriate coverage of all attainment targets. However, the department uses little ICT to support mathematics, despite its close proximity to the ICT suite. Work to establish numeracy across the school is in its infancy, although appropriate examples were seen in lessons of science, geography, music and PE.

SCIENCE

90. The attainment of students by the age of 14 in the National Curriculum Tests last year was well below the national level. In the school, 23 per cent of students gained a Level 5 or above and this is below the national figure of 59 per cent. This figure has not changed significantly to that reported at the time of the previous inspection in 1996. This year, 26 per cent of the boys gained a Level 5 or above compared to the 18 per cent of girls who reached this level. The number of students who gained a Level 6 or above was much lower than the national figure. Of the three core subjects, students in science produce attainment levels, lower than those found in English and mathematics.
91. In Years 7 to 9, the higher ability students were able to discuss the properties and characteristics of series and parallel circuits. They were also able to describe the process of respiration. Lower attaining Year 9 pupils were able to recall the characteristics of living things. These students also understood that the genetic material is stored in the nucleus of a cell and the role of chromosomes in inheritance.
92. The number of students in science obtaining a GCSE grade of A*-C is well below the national level. The number of students who obtained a grade of A*-C in the double award examinations is 15 per cent which is well below the national figure of 49 per cent. The trend at this level is relatively unchanged over the past two years. When the performance of boys is compared to girls, at GCSE, the pattern seen is similar to that at 14.

93. The able students in Year 11 were able to design, perform and evaluate investigations as part of their GCSE science coursework in a very thorough manner. These students were also able to use their numeracy skills to calculate speed and distances from graphical data. The lower attaining pupils in Year 11 understood that plants produce starch and this can be tested by the use of iodine.
94. There is a good relationship between the students and staff in science. Most students, especially the higher attaining students, behave well and work hard in science. Students in the lower school have the best attitude to the subject. Students are keen to enter into class discussions, have the confidence to answer questions and use their oracy skills constructively. Students show a positive response to staff that set and maintain high expectations with respect to behaviour and attainment.
95. Students work in a safe and enthusiastic manner when performing practical work. A good example of this was in a Year 11 group who were undertaking an investigation on the presence of starch in the leaves of plants. The motivation and behaviour of a few lower attaining pupils was, at times, poor, especially in Years 10 and 11 and this affected their learning. This poor attitude was seen only on a few occasions, when classroom control was not strong and there was insufficient pace or inappropriate tasks were set. In some lessons, a few students did not have books with them and this had a detrimental effect on their learning. Girls, regardless of their level of attainment, produce work that is complete and well presented. Higher attaining boys have complete notes but their standards of presentation are lower. A large number of lower attaining boys produce work that is often incomplete and remains uncompleted. In Key Stage 4, the notes retained in folders are often disorganised and of a poor quality. The quality of work by boys in science and the standards that are accepted from them needs to be dealt with by the science department.
96. The teaching in science is well planned and taught by qualified and experienced staff. In half of the lessons the teaching was good or better, with only one instance of unsatisfactory teaching being observed. In most lessons, registers were taken formally and this ensured that the lesson started in an ordered manner. All lessons involved the teacher describing and explaining the aims of that lesson. The most successful lessons were those where there was good lesson planning, including a structure that ensured the lesson had sufficient pace linked with effective class control. Not all the staff teaching science are using relevant and motivating teaching styles with an emphasis on the practical aspects of science investigations. There is an issue of consistency in the teaching of science across the school that needs to be examined, especially in the area of practical work.
97. The work covered in science is relevant to the students' experience and this motivates students by linking their interests to the subject matter. One very effective lesson on distance and time based on 'Racing slugs' in Year 8 included an excellent introduction of the contestants of the race and then a link made between their race styles and a graph of the outcomes. Overall, it was a very effective learning experience for the pupils. Homework is structured and is an integral part of the lesson plans. It is marked according to the departmental policy with effort and attainment grades, often with additional narrative comments.
98. Students are making progress in their learning in all years. This is because the quality of teaching has improved, particularly in relation to lesson planning and attention to literacy skills. Students are aware of the progress they are making from the assessments made on end of topic tests and are informed of their potential level or grades on a regular basis. The setting of students according to their level of attainment in the subject in Years 7 to 11 allows teachers to plan work that is suitable and extending and this has a positive effect on the students' attitudes to learning. However, there is one group in Year 10 that is of mixed ability and they require special planning to provide these pupils with suitable learning materials. An example of this was a lesson based on the Haber process where some pupils understood the concepts of reversible reactions and energy changes in reactions while other pupils in the group could not distinguish between reactants and products. Literacy and numeracy skills are increasing but, at times, restricts the progress of pupils for example when performing calculations in science.
99. Students that have special educational needs are well supported in science, with additional staffing, and learn well in Years 7 to 9. The learning support staff are involved in the planning, are aware of the lesson content and, therefore, are in a position to support a number of students in the lessons

in an efficient manner. There is a wide range of opportunities throughout the school for students to use their literacy and numeracy skills, both in written work and class discussions. The use of computers is not widespread in science. The department does not possess, at present, the necessary resources to enable the full use of the data logging equipment and needs to acquire this equipment in order to provide this aspect of science. There is some use of information and communication technology for research and word processing by students and that motivates those students with poor handwriting to produce a higher standard of work. The use of information and communication technology in the teaching of science in the school makes insufficient use of simulations and modelling.

100. The management of the department is very good. The head of department was appointed this academic year and has been responsible for the introduction of a range of new initiatives. This includes a new course in Year 7 that is better suited to the pupils being based on a practical and relevant approach. This new course will be extended into the remainder of Key Stage 3 over the next two years. The course in Key Stage 4 will need to be reviewed to increase the range of teaching styles and activities of the students and making stronger links with the regular assessments held throughout the two years. The monitoring of the teaching in the department is formal and has helped to raise the quality of teaching within science.
101. The department has also ensured that the majority of issues raised in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. This includes the introduction of a range of investigation opportunities for the students that are effectively linked with the records of students' attainment in the subject. The department has also been successful in raising the quality of teaching and the introduction of the assessment of pupils to monitor their attainment and progress. Lessons are now well planned, although a wider range of teaching styles need to be introduced. However, some issues still need further work and these include the attitudes of older pupils, especially with respect to expectations.

ART AND DESIGN

102. The last time the school was inspected, standards in art and design were below average by the end of Year 9 and well below average by the end of Year 11. They have become average for pupils aged 14 by the end of Year 9. Standards have slightly improved to be slightly below average for older pupils aged 16 by the end of Year 11. These pupils are starting to overcome some of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. In the past, they were unable to talk confidently, with an understanding of their own work and the work of the artists influencing their work. Their growing understanding of what they are doing is now impacting on standards.
103. In the year 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades was well below the national average. The proportion gaining A* to G grades was below the national average. No pupils attained A* or A grades. The trend over the past five years has been for girls to outperform boys in their GCSE examinations by gaining a higher number of A* to C grades. By the age of 14, there is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls. This is due to satisfactory planning and teaching which helps boys to maintain equivalent standards to girls. Pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils are satisfactorily recognised and make satisfactory progress. The absence of pupils from school and their intermittent attendance, together with pupils missing some of their art work when withdrawn for the support programmes the school provides, is having a significant impact on the continuity and progression of the pupils' work and their eventual attainments.
104. By the age of 14, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the design and construction of mosaic patterns with the use of clay tiles. This is due to the good teaching, which emphasises the construction of mosaics with clay tiles with an appropriate concern for a balanced pattern and design. Pupils achieve below satisfactory levels in some of their drawing and painting work. Teachers satisfactorily introduce pupils to the mixing of colours and the use of pencil drawing to represent what they see, but progress is slow. Pupils have very limited previous experiences of this work and some work being attempted is insufficiently developed in a sequence of lessons. There are also too few opportunities for pupils to use a wide range of media. An insufficient range of

paints is used, with too much of a concentration on the use of powder colour. Pastel and charcoal are inadequately used.

105. On occasion, pupils make satisfactory progress. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson, where pupils compared their previously drawn sketches to their successful use of paper squares to design mosaic patterns. Here they used clay tiles of varying colours and sizes to make a curved mosaic pattern. They showed a satisfactory awareness of the importance of using space and balance in the design of their patterns. The teacher supported their learning well, helping them particularly to arrange their designs by reference to pictures of completed mosaics. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils made good progress in their work based on 'pop art'. The pupils showed a satisfactory analysis of the object they observed, representing it in line and shade, with a growing understanding of a pop art style being interpreted in their drawings. Overall, teaching is good up to the age of 14.
106. The good standards of teaching seen for pupils up to age of 14 are not always maintained for older pupils up to the age of 16. Here, overall teaching is satisfactory. This is due to uncertainty regarding the standards pupils have previously acquired and their respective needs. Three dimensional work in clay enabled pupils to demonstrate satisfactory attainment. A Year 10 class successfully designed clay objects influenced by vegetables and plants. They showed a sensitive approach towards the development of their designs. The teacher satisfactorily evaluated the pupils' progress as they continued with the work. However, the teachers occasionally failed to observe that some pupils were not joining their clay designs to the larger clay object with the use of slip or water. Progress was further hindered by the pupils having limited experience of this type of work up to the age of 14. In Year 11, because pupils are learning new methods and techniques for the first time, insufficient progress is made. The curriculum is not developed with a wide enough content from Year 7 onwards. By the age of 14, pupils become disenchanted. This is due to the limited amount of media they have to use and having to attempt work which is not building in a meaningful way on their previously learnt and assessed experiences.
107. Overall, there are not clearly defined procedures for progressively assessing pupils' attainments and teachers insufficiently use assessment to inform their taught lessons. This leads to teachers giving pupils work which they find too difficult and for which they have not yet acquired the necessary skills. There are few recorded assessments to indicate the strengths and weaknesses of each pupil.
108. Teacher expectations of what the pupils can do are too low. Teachers do not show a shared commitment to improve the subject with a firm knowledge of the pupils' capacity to succeed. The subject is managed on an ad hoc basis and this affects the school's capacity to focus its attention on the areas it should, especially the need to make teaching more consistent, challenging and to progressively develop the subject with a wider content and use of a wider range of media across the key stages. Inadequate use is made of information and communication technology. The planned scheme of work for pupils up to the age of 14 has not yet been updated to meet the present National Curriculum. The indicated objectives and levels of attainment are not used to influence content and planning. There is no audit of equipment and resources. Teachers are starting to support pupils' literacy skills, but insufficiently support the pupils' numeracy skills. Display celebrating pupils' successes and their on-going work is satisfactory.

DANCE

109. Dance continues to make a significant contribution to the ethos of the school. Pupils have the opportunity to take dance in Years 7 to 9 and others opt to take the GCSE course in Years 10 to 11. The new head of department has introduced assessment levels in Years 7 to 9 and, in lessons, the majority of pupils are achieving good standards. In terms of A* to C grade passes at GCSE, standards are broadly in line with similar schools in 2000. The quality of teaching is excellent and enables pupils to make very good progress in all aspects of their work. A consistent feature of lessons is the quality of development of pupils' literacy and evaluative skills. The very positive response of pupils to the teachers' high expectations helps promote a very positive learning atmosphere, both in their lessons and in extra-curricular activities. On some evenings, for example, some 50 pupils were observed rehearsing for a forthcoming local competitive event. Leadership and management is developing well. Since her appointment last September, the new

head of department has introduced documentation to underpin her day-to-day management of the subject including, for example, schemes of work for Years 7 to 9. Dance is taught mainly in the school hall and there is appropriate display. However, the solid floor limits the range of movement pupils can make.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

110. Standards in design and technology are below national average. They have remained at this level over the past few years. All evidence indicates that, although standards could be higher and examination results for 16 year olds could be better, the quality of teaching and learning has been effective in promoting at least satisfactory achievement.
111. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is below nationally expected standards. Pupils have an insecure knowledge of the subject by the age of 14. They know how to use tools and equipment to a satisfactory standard and can work with various templates and jigs that help them to achieve a satisfactory level of consistency. Satisfactory standards were seen in their textile products and in the structures they make in Year 9. However, their understanding and application of the design process is insecure and research and evaluation are weak elements of their work.
112. GCSE results in 2000 were well below national averages as were the results in the two preceding years. Results in design and technology compare favourably with other GCSE results in the school. Current groups in Year 11 are achieving a higher standard than this in their practical work though their folder work is not at a satisfactory stage of completion for this time in the year. Year 11 pupils' attainment in lessons overall is below average. They have satisfactorily mastered a range of skills in making products but their folder work is below average and their knowledge and understanding of the properties of materials is generally weak. Though overall standards are below average, higher attaining pupils are attempting a good range of products and are using sketching well to develop their ideas. Their research is thorough and helps to shape designs such as a needlework box project based on traditional designs which the student has sketched and developed to suit the materials and skills available. There is little use of ICT to present design work due to the lack of computers in the department.
113. Pupils generally work purposefully and demonstrate a positive attitude to the subject. However, younger pupils often demand a lot of attention from teachers. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are more confident in practical work and help each other in their tasks, offering comment and criticism in a positive manner.
114. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with nearly half of lessons featuring good teaching. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are mostly good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. The best teaching is well planned and leads to a coherent learning programme that is well supported with prepared lesson notes and work sheets which can then be retained to build up a good picture of individual progress. In some classes, there is a very good practice of individual mentoring and target setting in Year 11. Each day's progress is reviewed effectively in the plenary session at end of lesson. There is a sound stress on health and safety. Teachers work well with pupils with special educational needs. They support the literacy policy well and are careful to introduce new words. Teaching and learning is well supported by a very good technician and classroom assistants.
115. The management of the department is good and has recently been strengthened by the appointment of an experienced second in department. The head of department has a clear view of how the department should be developed and is fully aware of the need to provide more support for pupils in Years 7 to 9 in the form of design booklets which record and track progress and which provide opportunities for pupils to extend their work.

DRAMA

116. GCSE results in drama have varied over the last three years. They were below average for A*-C grades in 1998, close to average in 1999 and well below in 2000. On the other hand, almost all pupils attained a grade in the range A* - G during this period and, in 2000, pupils taking drama performed significantly better in this subject than in others. In the limited observation undertaken in this inspection, standards are above those expected nationally at ages 14 and 16 as a result of the high quality of teaching, which is consistently very good and often excellent.
117. The younger pupils quickly learn to work with concentration and focus and they develop physical and self-control through exercises, role-play, improvisation and simulations. They understand and can incorporate techniques such as 'freeze frames' and 'thought tracking' in their work. In Year 9, they are able to take account of the presence of an audience and use space effectively. They can evaluate their own and others' work. By Year 11, pupils have consolidated these skills and become confident in working together as a group or with different members of the group. They become increasingly independent learners, capable of managing highly effective group presentations. They accept suggestions from each other and approach their drama work in a mature, confident and thoughtful manner.
118. Speaking and listening skills are developed effectively and pupils often speak fluently and convincingly, both in role and when involved in discussion or responding to questions. A lesson with Year 11 pupils epitomised these achievements, when pupils created a documentary-style presentation about "Human Rights and Disadvantage". Their preparation and collaboration was impressive. The performance required co-ordination of movement, use of symbolic posture, trust in each other, focus and control. Pupils were able to "hold the stage" as individuals and as a group. One girl used her voice expressively and sang with some force and power. The whole presentation developed in intensity and conveyed effectively the pupils' awareness of the plight of disadvantaged people.
119. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They enjoy their drama work and respond with enthusiasm and consistent interest to its challenges. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly successfully integrated into drama classes and correspondingly have very good attitudes and make equally good progress. Pupils' commitment to drama is evident from their attendance at after-school classes and during the school holidays.
120. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject, actively involve pupils through a variety of stimulating and challenging tasks, and expect and achieve high standards. They use questioning very effectively to make pupils think about what, for example, an audience will see as they perform, or the significance of understanding or empathising when portraying people's lives. They encourage pupils to evaluate their own and others' work, and this habitual critical and supportive analysis contributes significantly to pupils' progress. They are very good models, displaying excellent posture, speech and movement. When teaching is excellent, it inspires pupils and observers alike: pupils are totally engrossed in their learning and observers can only speak of "modelling like silk" or "exquisite work"!
121. Drama has made and continues to make a significant contribution to the life of the school. Productions of high quality are mounted annually and appreciated widely. Leadership is very good and the team's quality is responsible for producing the above average standards observed in this inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

122. Pupils' attainment in geography is well below the standards expected, both at age 14 and age 16, for most pupils, except the few most able where it is broadly in line with national averages. There is some evidence of improvement, however, as pupils choosing the subject at GCSE do better in geography than they do in their other subjects, especially boys.
123. The standards reached in lessons reflect the difficulties that many pupils experience with writing tasks, reducing their attainment to below, and often well below, average standards. Pupils talk about the subject far better than they write about it. Many can remember what they learnt in their last or current lesson, for example, Year 11 pupils can name the range of people and bodies

owning land in the National Parks of England and Wales whilst pupils in Year 8, who have special educational needs, can name some features of rain forests, like lianas and buttress roots. Generally, however, pupils' gains in knowledge is better than their understanding and their ability to explain why something happens, for example, why it is warmer in rain forest areas than in the United Kingdom. Many average and more able pupils find it difficult to apply what they have learnt in one context in another and Year 11 pupils, for example, struggle to explain how making a reservoir bigger can result in some local people benefiting whilst others may suffer. This often results in work being left unfinished in all year groups. Less able pupils, many of whom have special educational needs, achieve limited success. Closely structured worksheets and fun activities like quizzes keep most on task and making an effort.

124. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is more effective when they have the opportunity to experience geography at first hand, for example, in the school grounds. Pupils in Year 9 can identify and explain at a simple level why some locations within the grounds are warmer than others and they know the difference between weather and climate. Pupils' graphical skills and the quality of their presentation are generally weak, although pupils in Year 11 take pride in the presentation and completion of coursework on a local river for their GCSE examination. Many pupils in Year 10 struggle to understand important geographical concepts, like sustainable tourism. Their understanding improves when such concepts are well illustrated through mini-case studies, for example, how some tourist activities can benefit local residents and be less harmful to the environment than others. Few pupils are confident writing at length and even the average and more able would benefit from the use of the writing frameworks now being used with less able pupils.
125. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in all lessons and occasionally it is good and has improved since the last inspection. All lessons have some good features. Lessons are planned very thoroughly and the learning intended made very clear in statements at the start of every lesson and tested briefly at the end with a focused question. Teachers use a good range of well-timed activities and different resources to maintain pupils' interest and motivation. Some activities, however, are not as well developed as they could be to extend and challenge pupils' learning, to develop their thinking skills and to encourage them to work independently, with structured support. Low teacher expectations of what pupils might be capable of result in low level responses, for example, when they are required to explain geographical processes like how a river erodes its bed and banks. This helps to explain the slow improvement in raising pupils' attainment. Homework is built in to most work and is marked regularly but not linked to the National Curriculum. Teacher expectations of how pupils should behave is high and, as a result, pupils behave well and relationships are good.
126. The head of department has worked extremely hard to improve the quality of teaching in the subject through meticulous lesson planning and, at the same time, inducting a newly qualified teacher in each of the last five years. As a result, insufficient progress has been made in the use of information and communication technology and in planning the curriculum overall to focus on the requirements of the revised National Curriculum and its assessment. Progress has been made but the weaker features of both pupils' work and curriculum planning and assessment indicate a need to continue improvements under way since the last inspection.

HISTORY

127. Attainment at age fourteen, in the school's assessment tests and as observed in lessons, is below that expected of pupils of similar age nationally. Pupils consistently show a level of knowledge and understanding below that found in other schools.
128. At GCSE, attainment is well below the course requirement for a significant number of pupils and results, overall, are well below those of other comprehensive schools. In 1999, of the 16 pupils entered, only one achieved grade A*-C. In 2000, 37 pupils were entered and 27 per cent achieved that level in comparison with a national figure of 57.5 per cent. The results of boys were low in comparison with girls. The results are well below that expected nationally and the standards observed during the inspection reflect a similar picture, although the trend is one of overall improvement in standards. It is clear that attainment has been affected by the staffing difficulties experienced by the department last year, by low standards of literacy and poor attendance by a significant number of pupils. However, standards are now improving because of the quality of

teaching within the department.

129. In Year 9 pupils are able to talk about the topics that they have studied and they have an understanding of some of the major events of the last century. Although their knowledge of key developments is often weak they are able to use a variety of resources, including photographs, to form conclusions about the past. Some written work is well presented and more able pupils are able to fit their studies into a wider context and to show how events link together, for example, in gaining an understanding of incidents of anti-Semitism prior to the twentieth century. However, many pupils show lack of understanding of cause and effect and their poor reading comprehension limits their ability to use written sources of evidence.
130. By the end of their GCSE course, pupils have a broad knowledge of the topics that they have studied. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, understand about the way that westward expansion of settlement in the USA has been portrayed in the novels and in the cinema and are aware that it has rarely been accurate. Study of the life of Native Americans who lived on the prairies and, in particular, their reliance on the buffalo, has given them a clear understanding of change over time. The highest attaining pupils are able to understand the concept of Manifest Destiny and they are generally competent in the use of documents and extracts. Some of them have produced well-presented course work in their local study on Porchester Castle which shows their confidence in using computers. Lower attaining pupils are able to evaluate evidence about key figures in the history of the USA, such as Billy the Kid. However, the majority of pupils are held back by lack of knowledge and understanding and they are not skilled in answering questions based on extracts or illustrations. There are some real weaknesses in their knowledge, skills and understanding, particularly at the higher levels required at GCSE.
131. Attitudes to the subject are positive and the majority of pupils work hard and contribute well in lessons. They enjoy activities in class and find the work interesting and challenging. More pupils are now choosing to take the subject at GCSE. The response of those pupils who attend is often very good but the progress of a significant minority is adversely affected by their poor record of attendance and reluctance to give in homework or to complete course work.
132. Learning is very well managed in history. There is a consistent focus on providing the opportunity for the improvement of skills in literacy especially in the use of key vocabulary and writing frames. Tasks and resources are always well matched to the attainment of pupils. Because of this, progress for the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good and they achieve well.
133. The majority of pupils are able to develop an understanding of chronology and the impact of change over time. Progress is good because pupils have the opportunity to develop skills in history as they progress through the school. The work of pupils at the beginning of Year 7 shows that they are learning to use a range of sources to find out about the past and they build on these skills as they progress through the school. They are often given the opportunity to work in pairs and groups for independent research learning and this is particularly effective. The tasks set for homework link well with work in class and information and communication technology is also used to support learning. At GCSE, pupils make secure progress in the development of the skills which help them to answer complex source based questions and produce course work. Pupils are grouped by ability and this gives them the opportunity for structured and exciting activities which are suited to their level. The highest attaining pupils are being given challenging tasks and pupils of lower potential attainment are well supported. Targets are set and pupils are assessed effectively ensuring that progress is carefully monitored. Good progress is made by pupils with special educational needs because of the quality of support available and the good use of appropriate resources.
134. Teaching is very good. The quality of all teaching observed was at least good and often very good or excellent. Teachers are using a variety of approaches to teaching and learning. They are knowledgeable about the subject and the lessons observed were very well planned, managed and resourced. Lessons have clear objectives which focus on what younger pupils and examination candidates should achieve by the end of the lesson. There is a clear aim to encourage pupils to become active learners, rather than passive listeners, and to provide them with the confidence to

take responsibility for their own learning. This is particularly evident in lessons which introduce Year 7 pupils to two different and possibly conflicting views of the Middle Ages. Because of the way the learning is developed, they are encouraged to see it as a period of creativity and culture as well as one of brutality.

135. The history department has many strengths and there has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. It is well managed, particularly in the development of schemes of work and resources and in the use made of assessment. Planning is now a real strength. Careful planning and monitoring ensures that resources and assessment procedures are being effectively used to promote progression and continuity and to ensure that pupils are provided with a really varied, relevant and interesting experience in studying history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

136. All pupils in the school have access to timetabled information and communication technology lessons and they learn about the full range of applications of ICT expected of them by the National Curriculum. They make good progress in these courses but, mainly due to a lack of opportunity to reinforce their skills in the other subjects of the curriculum, standards of attainment are below national expectations in all years and progress overall is barely satisfactory. The school plans to make sure that a greater range of opportunity is offered to pupils by producing a scheme of work which sets out just when and how ICT will be taught in all subjects taught in the school.
137. The school has introduced GNVQ ICT courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and the first entrants will receive their results this summer. This is good provision because it makes sure that all these pupils have the opportunity to learn ICT applications that are likely to be useful to them in their future lives. The progress all pupils including those with special educational needs, are making in these courses is good. One Year 11 group will complete their GNVQ ICT course in one year and, although this is a major challenge, their estimated grades show that most are likely to achieve at least a pass grade. The course chosen makes very good use of information and communication technology as all course materials including tutorials, are available on line. Pupils make good use of these and this frees the teacher to concentrate on working with individual challenge.
138. In their timetabled ICT, Year 7 pupils are gaining basic ICT skills and are confidently applying them. They know some of the advantages and disadvantages of using ICT and are able to use word processing and desktop publishing software satisfactorily to produce letters, logos and letterheads. By the time they are in Year 9, they can transform the data they enter on their spreadsheets into charts. They use these to communicate their findings to others. They can also use spreadsheets to model information, such as when they work out the likely costs of a party. Pupils in these first three years at the school create and use simple databases. They are also able to search for information on the Internet using straightforward questioning. They get to know some of the applications of control technology through the design and technology scheme of work, but they lack hands-on experience and do not get the chance to write simple programs to, for example, control the movement of a robotic arm or a cursor about the computer screen. Although pupils are making good progress, they are given few opportunities to develop their skills in other subjects of the curriculum and their attainment remains below average.
139. Teaching is satisfactory overall, although it is good in those lessons taught by subject specialists. Lessons are well planned within the framework of a useful scheme of work for younger pupils and the GNVQ syllabi followed by older pupils. Lessons start with objectives that are shared with pupils and which give them a clear idea of what they have to do. A good feature of all lessons is the way that teachers systematically work around classes to promote the progress of individuals. The ICT technician also makes a valuable contribution to lessons. He has good knowledge of the applications pupils are using and shares this effectively with them. Pupils ask for help when it is needed and are patient enough to wait their turn. At the end of lessons, teachers discuss what has been achieved and encourage pupils by praising them for the progress they have made. The course materials are challenging and are evidence of the high expectations teachers have of their pupils. The IT co-ordinator and his support staff regularly work with pupils after school hours and will help them with their own projects, such as web site design. Behaviour in ICT is generally good and

pupils are mostly motivated by the technology. They show interest during the introductory sessions that set tasks but are keen to get down to practical work.

140. Slow progress has been made since the last inspection, affected mainly by the loss of a specialist teacher and by difficulties caused by the development of the new and much improved network of computers. Subjects have found it difficult to offer opportunities for the use of IT in their area because of poor access to computers. The training of teachers under a government scheme has not yet started, although it will do so in the near future. The ICT co-ordinator and senior staff are working together to address these issues. The ICT co-ordinator has a clear vision of the future of the subject and the headteacher and governors are committed to helping him in his efforts to support ICT across the curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

141. Since the last inspection, attainment in Key Stage 3 has improved. It is now satisfactory in the majority of lessons. However, the end of Key Stage 3, results for the last two years were well below the national average. At Key Stage 4, GCSE results are well below the national average: 36 pupils entered in 1999. Of these 11 per cent gained A* - C; in 2000 only 20 entered and 5 per cent gained A* - C. Attainment is still unsatisfactory.
142. Pupils are making unsatisfactory progress in lessons in Key Stage 4. The very limited use of the target language limits pupils' confidence and competence in developing and using the language. They make slow progress in developing vocabulary and have limited experience of using another language in limited conversation.
143. At Key Stages 3 and 4, the quality of teaching is satisfactory in the majority of lessons. There is still some unsatisfactory to poor teaching, but it is in the minority. When teaching and learning are at their best, the pace is lively, pupils are engaged in a variety of activities which capture their attention and interest, good use is made of flashcards and audio tapes with song and dialogue. In lessons where all four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are integrated to reinforce specific content, pupils learn best.
144. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by insufficient use of the target language by teachers and few opportunities for pupils to learn to use it as a normal means of communication in the classroom. When new vocabulary is introduced, there is very little reinforcement to help pupils get the correct pronunciation and intonation. Pupils are not encouraged to commit new phrases to memory so that they will be able to use them in other situations. Sometimes there is a very narrow range of activities and over-dependence on written prompts, such as matching pictures to phrases. In these lessons, the pace is slow and expectations are low. The French assistant is not used effectively as most of her time is spent assisting pupils in English in the classroom or recording them speaking French. Pupils are embarrassed about speaking because they are not given sufficient opportunities to practise their pronunciation before being recorded.
145. Homework is not set and marked on a regular basis. There is insufficient evidence to show that teachers are monitoring and keeping a record of pupils' progress on a weekly or fortnightly basis. There is a tendency to rely on end-of-term assessments. This is having a detrimental effect on pupils' attainment.
146. In most lessons, attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory to good. Pupils respond very positively when the quality of teaching is good, but easily get bored when there is insufficient challenge and variety in the lesson. The majority are keen to learn.
147. Curriculum time for French is below the national recommendation of 10 per cent in all years with the exception of Year 11 full GCSE French group. Spanish has recently been introduced in Year 9 with 4 per cent curriculum time and 10 per cent in Year 10. Inadequate provision of time is affecting standards. However, the modern languages department has improved since the last inspection. The head of department is only in post since last September. Schemes of work are being developed; they are good for Key Stage 3, but much work still needs to be done for Key Stage 4. Overall, there is a more positive approach to language learning.

MUSIC

148. In 2000, teacher assessments of pupils' attainments show standards are below national averages, although evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards obtained at the age of 14 are in line with the level expected for pupils of the same age nationally. GCSE results in the last two years have been below the national average for grades A* - C, but all candidates achieved A* - G grades. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards obtained by the present pupils are rising and about in line with those expected nationally.
149. By age 14, standards in music are average and, as most pupils enter the school with well below average musical skills, this represents good progress over time. There is no significant difference in progress between boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as their peers. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils make gains in knowledge, skills and understanding and some are able to use computer programs to notate and edit their compositions. Year 7 pupils have good rhythmic skills and this allows them to work out note values and count beats and bars accurately when musical extracts are being played. Simple keyboard tunes help them to develop correct fingering technique and attain fluency of performance. Year 8 pupils learn about the development of the orchestra throughout time and this enables them to place musical extracts heard into a time frame. Small groups of pupils try hard to maintain the beat when doing simple drumming exercises to backing tapes to improve their coordination. Many Year 9 pupils increase their knowledge of world music by listening to musical extracts from other cultures and this enables them to plan their own compositions on African, Indian and Caribbean themes confidently. Class arrangements of calypsos are played on keyboards with xylophone backing to establish the rhythmic style in pupils' minds and to improve their playing ability. Progress is hampered for some classes by the performing arts timetable which does not allow all pupils to have a regular weekly music lesson.
150. Pupils' attainment is about average at age 16 with the exception of a very few able and gifted and talented pupils whose practical skills are used to support weaker pupils. Year 10 pupils study the development of opera and make progress in recognising arias and recitatives and the voices that sing them. Pupils in Year 11 get examination practice through aural recognition of musical extracts that reinforces their understanding of metre, mode, cadence and periods in musical history. Performance pieces for the GCSE examination involve singing, keyboard playing and drumming. Many pupils concentrate hard in order to raise their standard of playing and so increase their overall examination grade.
151. All lessons follow the pattern of listening to musical examples, practical work on keyboards, xylophones and drum kits, musical theory and searching questions to reinforce what has been covered in the lesson. The requirement of pupils to justify their answers, strengthens their listening and speaking skills. Pupils react positively to music and this encourages cooperation and good behaviour, even when moving from one task to another. The teacher has worked hard to establish good social skills and this has led to a calm working atmosphere where opinions are respected. Consequently, there is very little shouting out and off task behaviour. Pupils take part in activities and answer questions willingly and have good rapport with their teacher.
152. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, mainly due to the teacher's enthusiasm and high expectations which lead to sustained learning amongst most pupils. The teacher has good subject knowledge that enables pupils to get a balanced diet of the musical skills of performing, composing, appraisal and listening. Much reinforcement of basic skills takes place, particularly of listening and speaking and the use of musical language is encouraged as when discussing the periods of musical history with a Year 8 class. Through good classroom management and careful planning of lessons, pupils behave well and take their learning forward. Summing up takes place at the end of each lesson and good questioning effectively reminds pupils of the main points, as in a Year 10 lesson introducing opera.
153. The music department is well led and managed. The scheme of work addresses all statutory requirements and very careful records are kept but not sufficient practical work is recorded on tape.

Work is marked regularly but teacher comments do not always give a focus for the future. The assessment system is clear and understood by most pupils and the department is now starting to use the new levels for music recently introduced. The quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory because the music room is small and very cramped. This inhibits a selection of practical activities taking place at the same time. A further restriction to regular group work is the lack of suitable classroom instruments.

154. Since the last inspection, standards have risen and this has coincided with the appointment of a new head of department, the introduction of ICT and a thorough overhaul of the scheme of work and aims for the subject. Because of lack of space and shortage of resources, much of the work of the department is teacher-directed. Ways now need to be found to allow more experimentation and discovery through increased group work that will enable pupils' creative abilities to develop still further.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

155. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are broadly in line with national age-related expectations. By age 14, the majority of pupils is on line to achieve appropriate levels of attainment. In the course that all pupils take in Years 10 and 11, standards are satisfactory in terms of age-related expectations. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. There are no significant differences between the standards of boys and girls.
156. By age 14, achievement in basketball and gymnastics is good. In basketball, pupils' basic skills and techniques are secure and they are developing their knowledge of tactical considerations, such as half court press. The accuracy of their shooting, however, is not yet well developed. In gymnastics, many pupils are able to demonstrate diving rolls over a barrier. Control and poise at both the start and finish of movements is an area of development needed to improve overall gymnastic techniques. By age 16, pupils' basketball skills and techniques have improved further. Their analysis of tactical considerations, such as one-to-one marking, is well developed, as is the quality of their teamwork.
157. Across all years, pupils have a secure understanding of the principles and procedures of warm-up. In some games lessons, however, some of the pupil led warm-up lacks focus and specificity for the activity taking place. Although no pupils identified as having special educational needs were observed with additional help, they are well supported, integrated and make good progress. The level of challenge offered in lessons also enables the more physically capable to make good progress.
158. Since the last inspection, standards at GCSE have improved, both in terms of the numbers of pupils achieving A* to C grade passes and the average points score for the subject. In 2000, although a relatively small group, the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grade passes was broadly in line with the national average for similar schools. In relation to their prior attainment at the age of 14, pupils' achievement was good. Because of the small number of girls entered, it is not possible to comment on differences between boys and girls. In their theory lessons, Year 11 pupils are making good progress, for example, in developing their knowledge and understanding of the leisure and recreation unit of the syllabus. Year 10 pupils are also making good progress in both their theory and practical lessons. In badminton, for example, they are developing their techniques of attacking play. A few, however, are still not moving quickly enough to receive shots.
159. The quality of teaching is good overall across all years and has improved since the last inspection. There are now no significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching – this is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The high expectations of teachers, the challenge they offer pupils, together with the very good behaviour and positive attitudes and relationships amongst pupils, all help to create a positive learning atmosphere in lessons. All pupils are thus enabled to learn well and make good progress. In a Year 7 gymnastics lesson, pupils were fully involved in aspects of planning, performing and evaluating performance. This deepened their knowledge and understanding of the principles involved in rotation about an axis and enabled them to prepare short sequences before the end of the lesson. Pupils are made aware of their capabilities in all lessons

because teachers circulate well and offer constructive praise and criticism throughout. This aspect of pupils' learning could be improved by more guided opportunities to watch one another's performance, particularly in games lessons. This kind of opportunity deepens further pupils' knowledge and understanding and makes them more aware of what they need to do to improve the quality of their performance.

160. Clear introductions to all lessons ensure that pupils are made fully aware of what is expected of them. The planning of lessons, all of which include a structured variety of activities, ensures pace and purposefulness and is indicative of the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. All teachers are effective in their use of questioning, which allows them not only to enable pupils to consolidate what they covered in the previous lesson, but also to establish what pupils already know and understand. This also improves pupils' speaking and listening skills and ensures they understand and develop the use of appropriate terminology. The department's practice of team teaching double groups is very effective. In gymnastics lessons, for example, having two teachers enables the less confident, as well as the more physically capable, to receive attention. Hence, all make good progress in line with their capabilities. Although the non-participants are given observational worksheets to complete during the lesson, they are not always as fully involved as they should be, for example, as part of whole group introductions, demonstrations or in the coaching and evaluating others' performance. All teachers provide a structured summative session at the end of lessons to enable pupils to recap what has been the main focus. However, there is often the tendency for teachers to tell the pupils what they have achieved rather than to involve them by asking for their views. The quality and consistency of marking GCSE theory work is very good, for example, the use of comments to ensure pupils know what they have accomplished, as well as what they need to do to improve.
161. This is a strong and very well led department that continues to make a positive contribution to the ethos of the school. Indicative of the very good leadership and management from day to day is the high quality documentation that underpins the work of the department. There have been improvements in standards and the quality of teaching since the last inspection. However, litter on the field remains a problem and the quality of the changing facilities is unsatisfactory. Shower arrangements do not provide the privacy expected by both boys and girls – this has a negative impact on standards of hygiene. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 meets fully statutory requirements. However, in Year 10, not all pupils have the same amount of time in the course that all follow and for some there is insufficient time for the requirements of the National Curriculum to be fully met. This is as a result of the school's decision to modify the curriculum for this age group as part of its Education Action Zone status. Schemes of work are being further developed to match the learning objectives of the new National Curriculum and the new 'levels' for physical education have been introduced. Effective displays, including the display of key words, enhance the appearance of accommodation.
162. Extra-curricular provision is very good, with opportunities for both competitive fixtures and recreational activities. As a result of the department's continuing enthusiasm and dedication for this provision, individual boys have gained representative honours at district level in association football and a number of girls are individual district gymnastics' champions at under-14. Years 8 and 9 association football teams are district 5-a-side champions and the present Year 11 team achieved the league and cup double at district level. The Year 11 netball team is the district netball champions.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

163. Throughout the school standards are low. Pupils do not reach the standard expected by the age of 14. They explore the symbolism and fundamental questions of religion but their exploration lacks depth. They use correct religious terms in Hinduism but do not give a clear account of Hindu beliefs and values. They suggest ways in which to study religion but are less confident about how to begin their enquiry. Their knowledge and understanding lack the depth and detail expected.
164. At the age of 16 pupils are well below standard. They have little specific knowledge of religions and in their work pupils show less understanding than expected of how religious belief and practice give insight into questions arising from human experience. During lessons, some pupils produce a

personal response to an issue, such as the Holocaust, but most work slowly and write little. The 17 pupils in Year 11 who are following the GCSE (short course) in religious education are an exception. The standard of their work suggests that they are likely to achieve results at, or close to, the national average.

165. Teaching and learning, as observed in lessons, are good. The teaching shows good knowledge and understanding of the process and content of religious education. In the best lessons, the skills of listening, speaking and writing are combined and developed effectively. A distinctive feature of all lessons is that pupils are positive in attitude and behave well. All lessons begin with a challenge but many end without pupils being given the opportunity to share and celebrate their achievements. Lessons are less successful, that is, pupils do not learn enough, when there is insufficient input by the teacher and when the learning lacks structure and sequence. In some lessons, the teacher's expectations of pupils' learning are not clear enough or high enough. The quality of teaching and learning declines at Key Stage 4 but remains satisfactory. Teacher and learners inevitably adjust to the absence of accreditation.
166. The disparity between good teaching and slow progress, with the consequent low standards, is due to the shortage of time for religious education in the school's curriculum. Pupils receive about 18 hours of teaching a year which is well below the minimum of 45 hours specified in the agreed syllabus. The school knows that it is not meeting statutory requirements but its documentation does not indicate how the school intends to move towards compliance. There is not enough time for pupils to cover the prescribed content, or to reach the standard expected.
167. The shortage of time and the inclusion of religious education within the programme of personal and social education have led some shortcomings. However, improvements are being made to the schemes of work and in the planning of lessons. Systematic measurement of progress and reporting of attainment to parents remain tasks for the future. Within the limits of the time available, religious education makes a substantial contribution to pupils' personal development. In the spiritual and moral dimensions, pupils learn from religious belief and practice how to be reflective and how to maintain and develop a moral framework for themselves. In the social and cultural dimensions, pupils develop a sense of responsibility and begin to appreciate the richness and diversity of human experience in its different traditions.
168. Standards, both at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, have fallen since the last inspection. Shortage of time and lack of continuity are now major problems. Teaching, at Key Stage 3 and to the 17 pupils following the GCSE (short course) in Year 11, remains good. The previous report referred to the school's plans to introduce the GCSE (short course) for all pupils at Key Stage 4. This is the minimum requirement of the agreed syllabus but the school's commitment to its implementation has been lost. There have been losses and, as yet, no significant gains since the last inspection.