

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE TEST VALLEY SCHOOL**

Stockbridge

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116426

Headteacher: Miss W Morrish

Reporting inspector: Philip J H O'Neill  
3162

Dates of inspection: 29 April – 2 May 2002

Inspection number: 190381

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Roman Road  
Stockbridge  
Hampshire

Postcode: SO20 6HA

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs G Morgan

Date of last inspection: November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3162	Philip J H O'Neill	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11094	Ian Blair	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
15208	Anthony Briggs	Team inspector	Music	
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Science	
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
6620	Barry Juxon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	English	
31821	Brian McCann	Team inspector	Physical education	
10392	Donnaleen Radcliff	Team inspector	Geography	
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	History	
			Special educational needs	
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art and design	
17522	Nigel Stiles	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
10761	Patrick Willan	Team inspector	Religious education	

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London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Test Valley School is a mixed comprehensive school situated on the edge of Stockbridge, catering for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years. It serves a widespread geographical area including a number of villages. Over half the pupils are from outside the school's catchment area. The school receives pupils from seven main primary schools and from around 30 primary schools in total. The school has 661 pupils on roll: this is smaller than other secondary schools nationally. There are 352 boys and 309 girls on roll. The number on roll has grown by some 13 per cent since the last inspection and is expected to grow further over the next few years. In 2001, the school received 19 pupils other than at the usual time of admissions and 27 left the school before the usual time of transfer: these figures represent a higher than usual level of movement of pupils. At two per cent, a well below-average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. This figure does not provide a reliable indicator of the level of disadvantage represented in the intake, however. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, at 23 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need, at one per cent, is below average. Very few pupils come from a minority ethnic background and there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The levels of attainment of pupils joining the school have been rising over the years and are now average, with a good proportion who are above average; the full range of attainment is represented.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The Test Valley School is an effective school, providing a high proportion of good teaching. Pupils reach high standards and achieve well. The school is very well led and well managed and provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards are high across the school, particularly in design and technology where they are excellent.
- Pupils experience a high proportion of good and very good teaching and, as a consequence, make good progress.
- Leadership provides very clear educational direction and the school is well managed.
- Most pupils' attitudes to their learning and their attendance are very good

#### **What could be improved**

- Provision for religious education is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and standards are too low.
- There are weaknesses in the development of writing across the curriculum.
- Not all subjects make enough use of information and communication technology.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was previously inspected in November 1996. The governors and staff responded well to the inspection. They improved the structure and time allocations for the curriculum. There has been a considerable amount of effective work on extending the range of teaching and learning styles. There has been improvement, too, in the quality of what is provided for the support of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The programme of in-service training and support for staff, a weakness at the time of the last inspection, is now a

strength. The school now meets statutory requirements relating to the provision of information and communication technology, design and technology and music. It continues to fail to provide religious education in Years 10 and 11 in accordance with the agreed syllabus. Though the school still fails to meet the requirement for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, what it does provide is of good quality. Apart from the improvements brought about through the action plan following the last inspection, there have been very significant improvements in the management of the school, in the standards attained and in the progress made by the pupils in their work. Additionally, there have been substantial improvements to the accommodation provided for art, science, music and drama. The school has the vision, the drive and enthusiasm to continue to improve at a rapid rate.

## STANDARDS

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

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

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2001, in relation to all schools nationally attainment in mathematics and science was well above average and above average in English. When compared with schools in similar circumstances, attainment at this age was well above average in mathematics and science and average in English. In 2001, girls did better than boys in English but to a lesser extent than nationally, whilst boys and girls reach comparable standards in mathematics and science. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, girls did better than boys but the difference was less than the national difference. The trend in the school's results in the tests and in the GCSE examinations has been broadly in line with the steadily improving national trend. Standards in lessons and in work seen broadly reflect the standards reached in tests and examinations. Pupils reach particularly good standards in science at the age of 14, and in art at the age of 16. Standards reached in design and technology are very high across the school. Standards attained by 16-year-olds are below the expected level in religious education. Standards have improved steadily since the last inspection, both for 14-year-olds and 16-year-olds and reached a peak in 1999. The school sets and generally meets challenging targets for improvement.

Standards in literacy vary from good to satisfactory across the subjects, as there is inconsistency in the implementation of the literacy strategy. The main weaknesses are in standards in writing. Standards in numeracy are good across the school, though progress in the application of numeracy skills is slowed down where subjects do not implement the numeracy strategy fully.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and the few from minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve well in relation to their earlier levels of attainment in most subjects. Achievement is very good in art, though uneven in Year 7; it is outstanding in design and technology. Pupils aged 16 achieve unsatisfactorily in science and poorly in religious education.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The attitudes of the majority of pupils are very good and they participate happily in lessons and other activities. Most pupils value what the school offers them and respond well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall, the behaviour of the pupils is good in lessons and around the school. A small number of pupils across the years behaves less well in lessons and impedes their own and others' learning.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils and teachers work well together. A few pupils are more reluctant learners. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and staff are good.
Attendance	Attendance is very good. Pupils are punctual and lessons begin on time.

The pupils are clear that school is a place for learning. They respond very well to their work and show good levels of concentration.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good, with a significant proportion that is very good. A few lessons seen were excellent and a few unsatisfactory. The most significant strengths in lessons that work very well are the clarity of the teachers' explanations and the quality of demonstrations. These strengths ensure that lessons get off to a good start and pupils settle quickly to their work. English and mathematics are taught well. Science is taught very well in Years 7 to 9 and unsatisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. Literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily across the school. There is not enough writing in all subjects, however. The school is careful to attend appropriately to the needs of all pupils. The pupils are good learners. They are eager to know how they are performing and how to do better.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities that meets the needs of pupils. It does not meet the requirements for the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11 or for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, with further enrichment of learning through a good choice of trips and visits.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	These pupils receive good support and are helped to become good learners. They make consistently good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall this provision is satisfactory, with strengths in what is provided for pupils' social and moral development. There are missed opportunities, in lessons and assemblies, to deepen pupils' spiritual awareness. Pupils are not well prepared to live in a multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pupils are well supported in their personal development and guided satisfactorily overall in their academic work.

The school works well with parents in supporting their children's learning, though it does not make the best use of homework. It looks after its pupils well, supporting them assiduously in their work and in their personal lives.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides a very clear direction to the work of the school and is very ably supported by her two deputies. The school is well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors work very well together in supporting the school. They are very well led in carrying out their distinctive responsibilities and know the school's strengths and the areas for further improvement. They have ensured that most statutory requirements are met apart from those related to the provision for religious education for Years 10 and 11 and for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is assiduous in evaluating and improving what it provides and what it achieves.
The strategic use of resources	The resources available to the school are effectively directed towards the school's priorities.

There is a good level of qualified and experienced staff to teach the full range of the curriculum. The staffing to support pupils with special educational needs is also good. Resources are generally satisfactory, as is accommodation. The governors are careful to ensure that the school compares the costs and benefits of what it offers with that offered by other schools and seeks to improve its efficiency by invoking considerations of cost and value in all major budgetary decisions.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The progress their children are making</li><li>• The school expects their children to work hard and do their best</li><li>• The school is easy to approach with concerns and questions</li><li>• The quality of teaching experienced by their children</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The amount and consistency of homework</li><li>• The information provided about their children's progress</li><li>• The way the school works with them to support their children's learning</li></ul>

The inspection findings show that the parents' overall positive view of the school is well founded. The findings support the parents' misgivings about homework: though homework is provided satisfactorily overall, there are some inconsistencies in the way it is used and marked. Inspectors do not agree that parents are not well enough informed about their children's progress or that the school does not work well with them. On the contrary, the information provided by the school about the pupils' progress is good and the school works well with parents in supporting their children's learning.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Pupils join the school with standards of attainment that are average overall. As a result of consistently good teaching, overall standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and when the pupils leave the school after completing their studies in Year 11. In the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2001, in relation to all schools nationally, attainment in mathematics and science was well above average and above average in English. When compared with schools in similar circumstances, attainment was well above average in mathematics and science and average in English. In 2001, girls did better than boys in English but to a lesser extent than nationally whilst boys and girls attain comparable standards in mathematics and science.
2. Overall attainment in the 2001 GCSE examinations was above average in relation to all schools nationally and above average for schools working in similar circumstances. Girls performed better than boys. However, the difference between the boys' and girls' results was less than the national difference. The trend in the school's results in the tests and in the GCSE examinations has been broadly in line with the steadily improving national trend. The school sets challenging targets for improvement in standards and generally meets them.
3. Standards in lessons and in work seen broadly reflect the standards reached in tests and examinations. Pupils reach particularly good standards in science and in design and technology at the age of 14, and in art at the age of 16. Sixteen-year-olds reach exceptionally high standards in design and technology. Standards attained by 16-year-olds are below the expected level in religious education. Standards have improved steadily since the last inspection, both for 14 and 16 year-olds.
4. Standards in literacy vary from good to satisfactory across subjects, as there is inconsistency in the implementation of the literacy strategy. The main weaknesses are in standards in writing: pupils are not required to write often enough. Standards in numeracy are good across the school, though progress in the application of numeracy skills is slowed down where subjects do not implement the numeracy strategy fully.
5. Pupils achieve well in relation to their earlier levels of attainment in most subjects. The achievement of 14-year-olds is very good in science and excellent in design and technology. Sixteen-year-old pupils' achievement is very good in art and in design and technology. Pupils achieve unsatisfactorily in science and poorly in religious education at this age. Pupils with special educational needs and the few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds progress at the same good rate as their peers. There are examples of very good progress. The factors ensuring progress are the quality of teaching and good support in lessons, the range of curriculum provision and very good leadership.
6. Pupils in the school have a wide range of special educational needs. Their eventual attainment varies from high GCSE grades to a limited level of basic literacy and numeracy. Examination results show that these pupils reach their predicted levels. The written work of pupils with special educational needs shows that poor literacy skills are the main impediment to progress. Standards of presentation are higher in mathematics and science than in the humanities and other subjects. Written reports of experiments and notes in science show that the pupils with special educational needs

have a better understanding of this work than of the work they do in other subjects.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

7. Pupils are strongly supportive of the school and are appreciative of what it has to offer. They find it a friendly place in which they are treated as individuals. This attitude provides a good learning environment. Pupils' attitudes to the school and to their work are generally very good. Most pupils are well motivated, are keen to learn, have high levels of concentration and maintain a good work rate. A small number of pupils, however, has a tendency to be inattentive, thus requiring frequent intervention from the class teacher to keep them attentive to their work.
8. Pupils are generally well behaved in the classroom and hence lessons proceed in an orderly fashion. Most pupils listen attentively and follow instructions well. In a small minority of lessons, however, there is sometimes an undercurrent of chatter, which inevitably inhibits progress. Additionally, there are a few individual pupils who exhibit challenging and unsatisfactory behaviour which requires close, and successful, management by class teachers and other staff such as heads of year to prevent it affecting the education of others. Pupils behave well around the school at arrival, departure and break times. They show respect towards each other and school property and respond promptly to signals to return to their classrooms. Between lessons, they move around the school in an orderly way. The rate of exclusions is currently running at a level one might expect for a school of this size and type.
9. Relationships within the school, both amongst pupils and between pupils and staff, are good and thus the school functions as an orderly community. Pupils co-operate well with each other both in lessons and on other activities. Their good rapport with form tutors and heads of year makes it easy and natural for them to approach these members of staff to discuss personal problems. Instances of bullying are rare and when they do occur pupils say that they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils make good use of opportunities provided by the school to enhance their personal development and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Through the restructured school council, they participate in taking decisions, for example about the choice of charities to be supported each term and changes to the school uniform. Furthermore, some pupils take part successfully in initiatives such as Young Enterprise. Many pupils in Year 11 voluntarily provide help to tutor groups and individual pupils in Year 7, and this help is very much appreciated by the pupils who receive it. Pupils are generally keen independent learners.
10. The level of attendance at the school is very good and is well above the national average for secondary schools. It is consistently good across the year groups. Unauthorised absence is much lower than at similar schools. Absence arises mainly from a very small number of pupils who are persistently poor attenders, with whom the school deals individually. Pupils generally arrive punctually and hence the school day starts promptly. The very good attendance and punctuality of the overwhelming majority of pupils is consistent with their positive attitudes and enthusiasm for the school and ensures that they take full advantage of all that is on offer.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

11. Teaching is generally good across the school and is reflected in the good quality of the pupils' learning. Of the lessons seen, teaching, in around a quarter was very good, just under half good and just under a quarter satisfactory. A few lessons were

unsatisfactory and a few excellent. The quality of teaching and learning are excellent in design and technology and very good in science in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teaching is also very good in design and technology in Years 7 to 9 and in art in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is good across the school in English, mathematics, history, geography and physical education, and in art and geography in Years 7 to 9 and in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching is satisfactory across the Years in music, in geography in Years 10 and 11, and in modern foreign languages and religious education in Years 7 to 9. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in science and poor in religious education in Years 10 and 11.

12. A key strength in teaching is the clarity with which many teachers explain to the pupils what they need to know. Allied to this is the sharing of the objectives of the lesson with the pupils. These defining features of many lessons ensure that lessons get off to a brisk start, as the pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Lessons are strengthened, too, by the imaginative use of resources that help to engage all the pupils to the full extent of their competence. The teachers' knowledge of their subject lay at the heart of much good teaching in art and design and technology. In both these subjects, the strength of the teachers' knowledge of what they were teaching stimulated the pupils to higher and higher levels of attainment and increasing confidence in tackling problems they initially felt to be beyond their reach.
13. The use of questioning in a way that draws on the pupils' own ideas and helps them to seek for reasons for their views is a further strength in many lessons. It was a defining feature of an English lesson for Year 7 when the pupils were exploring the nature of poetry. The skilful and progressively demanding nature of questioning created an atmosphere of high expectations, leading, in turn, to pupils taking risks with their ideas. This raised the pupils' confidence in their capacity to reach for quite demanding ideas. This feature of many lessons encourages pupils to see themselves as responsible for their own learning and to trust in their capacity for success. The skilful management of behaviour, crucial in those lessons with a few potentially disruptive pupils, strengthens lessons that might otherwise lead to difficulties. The quality of support provided for individual pupils, through an astute identification of their needs, marks many lessons. This level of targeted attention helps the pupils to see how well they are achieving and how to do better.
14. Weaknesses in teaching arise, in the main, from occasional ineffective management of behaviour. Lessons that otherwise are planned and executed satisfactorily are occasionally weakened when the teacher inadvertently allows the pupils to determine the course of events or to choose the pace at which they work. These weaknesses sometimes lead to a sluggish pace to learning and a general loss of momentum in the lesson. The lack of challenge in activities is another occasionally debilitating feature of weaker lessons. In these cases, pupils readily settle for a modest pace in their work. A further weakness, in a few lessons, arises from the provision of activities that are too easy, with the consequence that time is wasted and little learned. Overlong introductions sometimes slow the start to lessons, leaving the pupils with little appetite for what is to follow.
15. Though homework is used satisfactorily to support pupils' learning, there are sometimes missed opportunities to use it to develop responsibility through independent enquiry. The homework policy is not always consistently implemented. Parents' concerns about inconsistencies in the provision of homework are well founded.
16. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well, both through support in lessons or through withdrawal from lessons for special help. Their individual education plans

are used effectively to plan the right level of support for all pupils. The wide range of need represented on the register of pupils with special educational needs is catered for to very good effect.

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

17. There have been significant improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection, with the full involvement of the governors. The arrangements for teaching information and communication technology have been improved. The time allocated to the teaching of history, geography and modern foreign languages has been increased and is now broadly in line with the national average. The time allocated to physical education has improved and is now above the national average in Years 10 and 11. The time allocated to the teaching of religious education is in line with the national average in Years 7 to 9, but is well below the average in Years 10 and 11, where the subject is taught as a part of the personal and social education programme. The arrangements for teaching religious education in Years 10 and 11 do not meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus. The curriculum has been significantly improved in Years 10 and 11 by the introduction of work-related learning.
18. The school provides a well-balanced range of learning opportunities that meet the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment. Pupils at all levels of knowledge and skill are included in what is provided to the full extent of their competence. In Years 7 to 9, all the National Curriculum subjects are offered. Pupils are generally taught in mixed-ability groups, but organised into sets in mathematics and English, with some setting in science and modern foreign languages. The time allocated to the teaching of science is above the average in Years 8 and 9. Pupils with learning difficulties receive a good level of help from the learning support department in developing both literacy and numeracy skills and through additional learning support in lessons. The good programme for personal and social education includes lessons on health, sex and drugs in all years. Pupils undertake a programme of careers guidance in Year 9, designed to ensure that each pupil continues to have a balanced programme of study in Year 10 and 11 which meets their individual needs.
19. The school has begun to implement the national literacy and numeracy strategies. The English department has restructured its schemes of work to incorporate the national initiative appropriately. Changes in the scheme of work and teaching methods have been particularly effective in raising the literacy skills of boys. Similar changes are beginning to be made to the schemes of work in other departments; design and technology has recently prepared a literacy skills booklet. The scheme of work in the mathematics department has been changed to include the national numeracy strategy and is being implemented satisfactorily. Whilst some other departments teach numeracy as a natural part of their scheme of work, the national numeracy initiative is not being consistently implemented across the school. The school does not have a numeracy policy; all teachers have received training on the national strategy.
20. The school offers a good range of GCSE courses in the common core subjects. Religious education is provided as an option and as a part of the personal and social education programme in Years 10 and 11 but the arrangement does not work well. GCSE courses in other subjects are chosen by pupils from three well-planned option blocks that were designed following useful consultation with both pupils and parents. These arrangements enable pupils to take courses in both French and German, two humanities subjects and two technology subjects. All pupils continue to follow the personal and social programme, which in Years 10 and 11 includes careers, health,

citizenship, study skills and religious education. A small group of selected pupils do not take a modern language but instead follow a good programme of work-related education, which includes school-based courses, courses at a local college and work experience. The school-based courses are offered in conjunction with the Andover Consortium. A small group of pupils does not take design and technology in order to allow them to take other courses in such subjects as the performing arts. The school offers additional effective lessons in reading and writing at work for the small number of pupils who do not take a full programme of GCSE courses and this supports their learning well.

21. The school provides personal, social and health education for all its pupils, mainly through a good programme of timetabled lessons which are well supported by tutor group sessions and assemblies. The curriculum is rich and relevant and ensures, for example, that the statutory requirements for sex education are fully met. Very good use is made of outside speakers from the police, fire and careers services. Thus there has been a significant improvement in the arrangements for personal, social and health education since the last inspection and, overall, this provision makes a positive contribution to pupils' development.
22. Working in a consortium of local organisations, the school provides a satisfactory work-related learning programme for some pupils in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils are selected on the basis of difficulties in learning French, but some request inclusion because they want to enter certain vocational careers. These courses are not offered to Year 9 as proper options, so pupils have to miss many other curriculum subjects including English, mathematics and science. Because teaching is good in the school, teachers generally ensure that pupils catch up with missed work, but the school recognises that this arrangement is not entirely satisfactory so, wisely, is keeping it under review. Provision for Year 10 is developing into a model which the school hopes to continue and refine.
23. All Year 10 pupils have access to a well-organised two-week work experience programme from which they had just returned prior to the week of inspection. Almost all spoke positively about this activity as enjoyable and valuable for their future lives. Pupils on the work-related learning programme extend this opportunity by subsequent attendance in the workplace on one-day-a-week basis. All pupils again spoke of the value they place on these activities, which are very carefully targeted to these pupils' employment aspirations.
24. The school offers a good programme of careers education in all years except Year 7. Lessons are normally taught as a part of the personal and social education programme. Parents, governors and visiting speakers occasionally supply contributions that provide a useful extra dimension to pupils' studies. In Year 9, pupils develop their decision-making skills through a programme in which they learn to know about themselves and about careers and the implications of taking certain options in Years 10 and 11. In Year 10, pupils prepare well for their work experience by learning about the world of work and undertaking mock interviews for jobs. In Year 11, pupils learn more about careers and are given good opportunities during special evening events to meet with their parents, local employers and representatives from universities and colleges. The school has a good careers section in its library that contains a satisfactory range of books and leaflets on job opportunities and further courses.
25. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities both at lunchtime and after school. Good and accessible activities are provided to support pupils' learning in art, computing, English, mathematics, modern languages, physical education, science



and technology. Special activities are provided for pupils with special educational needs to help them improve their spelling, reading, writing and computing. A very effective programme is provided to help pupils with special educational needs overcome their disabilities and co-ordination difficulties. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to obtain bronze awards under the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Under the Young Enterprise scheme, some pupils have set up their own business, financed by selling shares, to design and make jewellery, mirrors, T-shirts and greeting cards to sell to the public. A small group of enthusiastic pupils are working hard in groups on a sophisticated robot, which they hope to enter in the Young Engineer Robot Challenge. Pupils regularly make imaginative contributions to a newspaper, written by and for young people in the Test Valley.

26. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The aim of the school is to encourage pupils to appreciate the values and attitudes of others as a part of their work in all subjects. The school is partially successful in achieving this aim. The history department deals well with the spiritual aspects of some of the topics covered. Teachers in geography and design and technology develop a strong awareness of the fragility of ecosystems and the impact of man on the environment. The school offers an assembly for each year group twice a week that generally takes up the 'thought for the week' satisfactorily and consistently. Some assemblies include prayers and offer good opportunities for reflection. The school offers a satisfactory religious education programme in Years 7 to 9 but religious education is not well provided for in Years 10 and 11. The personal, social and health education programme helps pupils to develop self-knowledge. There are high quality displays in classrooms and around the school, some of which are expressive of spiritual values.
27. Provision for moral development is good. Pupils distinguish right from wrong and most have a high degree of self-discipline. They treat others with respect and offer help to others when needed, showing compassion to those who have personal difficulties. Teachers set a good example in the relationships they establish with pupils. Standards of behaviour in lessons are good overall. In history, pupils consider the moral implications of the holocaust and in geography they develop a sensitive awareness of the moral issues involved in the development of rural areas and inner cities. In religious education pupils consider the fairness and inequality between different countries from the perspective of different religions.
28. Provision for social development is good. The harmonious nature of the school is an indication of the good social development of pupils. Pupils work successfully together, for example in computing, English, history, mathematics, design and technology, religious education and physical education, where working in groups is regularly required. Pupils take responsibilities within the school, for example, whilst undertaking duties in reception, in the library and on the school council. Some pupils take responsibility by acting as captains of sport teams. Involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, the Young Enterprise scheme and Young Engineer scheme provide further good opportunities for pupils to develop social skills.
29. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have some good opportunities to develop cultural awareness in, for example, art, English, geography history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and design and technology lessons. In art, pupils consider the cultural aspects of life revealed in the work of well-known painters. In modern languages, pupils learn about French and German culture through visits abroad. In textiles, pupils consider different designs, products and materials from around the world. In history, pupils are given the opportunity to undertake overseas visits, visit historical sites in Britain and study local history. There are limited

opportunities for pupils to appreciate the cultural diversity of Britain and pupils are not well prepared to live in a multi-cultural society.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

30. The school exercises its duty of care for its pupils very well. A comprehensive and appropriate health and safety policy and the school's procedures ensure that pupils work in a safe and secure environment. For example, there are correctly marked emergency exits from all teaching areas, fire drills take place regularly and all potentially dangerous chemicals are kept in a locked room. An adequate number of staff have up-to-date first aid qualifications and there is a dedicated medical room where pupils can go if they are feeling unwell. The toilet facilities available to pupils are of variable quality, ranging from exemplary to substandard, and the school should press ahead with its refurbishment programme to bring all up to the standard of the best. There were no health and safety issues noted during the inspection giving rise to any significant concern. Very good procedures are in place for child protection, based on an appropriate school policy. The staff member with responsibility for this area has undergone suitable training and has had extensive experience in successfully handling actual cases. All staff are in a good position to identify children at risk.
31. Arrangements for the pastoral care and personal development of pupils are very good. These are principally provided through the tutor group system, which is very well managed by the heads of year. Extensive and meticulous records are kept on each pupil with the result that support and guidance is tailored to the individual needs of each pupil. Although pupils come from around 30 primary schools, each of these is visited by the head of Year 7 to ensure that all pupils intending to join the school are met before they arrive. The school handles very well the arrival of pupils at other times than the start of Year 7. The transition to post-16 education is well managed. There are good links with the local colleges of further education and other institutions providing for this stage.
32. Provision for the management of behaviour and the handling of bullying are very good and enables pupils to feel at ease within the school and make good progress in their learning. An effective system of rewards and sanctions is well understood by pupils. The school has very good procedures in place for improving attendance. Registers are generally well kept: the school has been notably successful in discouraging parents from taking pupils out of school during term time for family holidays. This is a key factor in maintaining the very high levels of attendance.
33. The school has good systems for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress: this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. For example, the record-keeping and tracking of the performance of individual pupils are very good. Although there are examples of excellent marking, there is a lack of consistency both within departments and across the school, with the result that some marking does not give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve. Furthermore, there are examples of grades given which are overgenerous. There is insufficient monitoring to ensure the consistent application of the school's very good assessment policy.
34. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. In Years 7-9, they experience a good range of literacy, reading, spelling and handwriting lessons. Some of these take place in tutor time but, in other cases, pupils are withdrawn from other lessons. These arrangements work well. In twice-weekly paired reading sessions, Year 11 pupils listen to Year 7 pupils read; as a result, their reading usually improves markedly. The school works hard to support pupils with emotional and behavioural

difficulties who are often the least responsive.

35. The department helps pupils with special educational needs to attend school trips by providing additional supervision if required. The 'Going for Gold' club (a special group of pupils who wish to improve their co-ordination skills through physical activities) meets regularly and helps improve co-ordination and social skills. These pupils, through their extra work, acquire the confidence to join in competitions on sports day. A weekly homework club helps pupils keep up with their work.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

36. Parents are generally supportive of the school and appreciate what it offers their children. In particular, they are impressed by the high standard of teaching and the knowledge teachers have of the pupils in their charge. They appreciate, too, the very high quality of pastoral care. They have some concerns over aspects of homework. Overall, parents feel that the school is improving and that they have made a good choice in sending their children to it.
37. The school has established effective links with parents through a number of means. Of particular note is the prompt and rapid contact with the home, either to discuss matters of concern or to report that a pupil has performed exceptionally well. The school responds well to parents' questions and concerns, regularly keeps them informed about school life through a range of high-quality publications and has an appropriate home-school agreement in place. The annual meeting between parents and the governing body is well attended. Nevertheless, some parents, especially those living more remotely from the school, feel that links with parents are not good enough. The school informs parents of their children's progress through annual written reports. These are of a very high standard, describing both strengths and weaknesses for all subjects, together with targets for improvement.
38. Parental involvement in the daily life of the school is inevitably restricted by the wide catchment area but is satisfactory overall. Some parents contribute their professional expertise effectively, for example in computing. Most parents support their children with their homework and projects. The parent teacher association is reasonably active and, through a range of fund-raising events, provides valuable financial support for the school.
39. The school consults fully with the parents of pupils to ensure that statements of special educational need are appropriately created. Assessment of special needs is systematic and thorough. The progress made by pupils in relation to the targets set for them in their individual education plans is monitored carefully by the learning support assistants. The individual education plans generally refer to literacy, numeracy or behavioural targets rather than subject skills. Teachers find them relevant and use them effectively, however. Annual reviews of statements of special need are held as required, with both pupil and parent attending. Appropriate reviews of statements of provision for individual pupils are held in Years 9, 10 and 11 and involve other specialists such as career advisors when necessary.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

40. Decisive leadership by the headteacher and very good support from her deputies have been key factors in bringing about significant changes since the last inspection. At that time, some telling weaknesses existed, particularly in the quality of teaching. The governors and staff responded well to the inspection and set in train practices,

procedures and planning that were sharply focused on improving teaching and raising pupils' standards of attainment. When the headteacher joined the school prior to the last inspection, much needed to be done to bring the school into line with the new and more rigorous climate of accountability. Decisive action led to the production of the right level of documentation to support the work of the school. A strength of the school is the overall quality of documentation. Its creation is perceived by the teachers as helpful and not just as an additional burden to carry. A further important development was the sharpening of procedures for monitoring teaching and learning, with the consequence that there is now more sharing of good practice and a very significant improvement in the quality of teaching.

41. The headteacher works closely with the governors, who are very well led in the exercise of their responsibilities. Through a clearly established committee structure, the governors are now involved in all aspects of the life of the school. They give particularly strong support to the work with pupils with special educational needs. They know the school's strengths well and what needs to be done to improve further. They share a very good range of relevant expertise and use it well. They have been strongly involved in ensuring that good appointments are made to key posts. They work closely with the school in seeing that it provides the best value it can with the resources at its disposal. They work particularly closely with the school in ensuring that considerations of cost and value are paramount in all major budgetary decisions.
42. The leadership and management of subjects are good overall. Science, art and design and technology are very well led. The leadership and management of English, mathematics, history, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and physical education are good. Geography, music and religious education are led and managed satisfactorily.
43. The development plan is well constructed. It is rooted in a realistic analysis of the school's needs and of what is possible to achieve within the constraints of its resources. Progress in implementing planning since the last inspection has been good overall. Past difficulties in recruiting staff, particularly in religious education, have proved to be a significant barrier to progress in some areas. Development planning demonstrates a good balance of concerns for the long-term future of the school and the more immediate, practical and particular concerns of the day. It establishes challenging but attainable targets and outlines clearly the measures needed to meet them.
44. The day-to-day management of the school is in the very safe hands of an efficient office staff. Teachers and other staff are supported in their work through clearly established and consistently maintained routines and practices, particularly those related to the health and safety of the pupils. The school's finances are very well managed and working comfortably within its budget. The governors receive clear information about the state of the budget: this puts them in a strong position to hold the school to account for the use of its resources. The spending of funds designated for specific purposes is carefully tracked, thus ensuring that these funds are directed towards the purposes intended.
45. The school's increased refinement in meeting its commitment to include all students to the full extent of their capabilities is particularly evident in the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs. What is provided is very well led. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the needs of the pupils and works very hard to offer help that closely matches these needs. The team of teachers and learning support assistants are well qualified and highly committed and

work closely and effectively together. There are well-thought-out preparations for the implementation of the new Code of Practice. The concerns of the last inspection have been addressed through some good improvements in all aspects of the work with pupils with special educational needs.

46. A good level of appropriately qualified and experienced staff meets the needs of the curriculum and the demands of managing the school. Staff new to the school are given very good support in becoming familiar with the school's policies and practices. The school's strategy for appraisal of the work of teachers and other staff and for performance management works well. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory and used well. The library is managed efficiently and makes a good contribution to the pupils' learning. The school makes good use of information and communication technology in the day-to-day management of the school and in the management of finance. Although it is used satisfactorily in enriching the curriculum, not enough use is made of information and communication technology across subjects.
47. Given the cost of educating each pupil, which is just above the average, the quality of leadership and management, the high proportion of good and very good teaching, the continuing improvement in standards of attainment and the good achievement of the pupils, the school provides good value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

48. In order to continue the drive towards raising standards of attainment the staff and governors should:

- (1) Raise standards of religious education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 by:
- meeting fully the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for the provision of religious education;
  - separating out more clearly from the programme of personal and social education in Years 10 and 11 those elements directed towards the religious education of the students;
  - allocating sufficient time for the teaching of religious education in Years 10 and 11.

(Paragraphs 5, 17, 20, 135-142)

- (2) Raise standards in writing across the curriculum by:

- implementing the literacy policy more radically across the school;
- monitoring carefully the extent to which each subject uses opportunities to develop the students' writing;
- ensuring that inaccuracies in spelling are handled effectively and consistently in all subjects.

(Paragraphs 4, 52, 58, 60, 61, 84, 94)

- (3) Ensure that information and communication technology is used well in all subjects.

(Paragraphs 46, 73, 85, 90, 95, 97, 103, 104, 109, 111)

### **Other matters for the attention of the governors:**

- (4) Marking and assessment of pupils work is not always consistently used to raise standards of attainment.

(Paragraphs 33, 58, 61, 76, 78, 84, 96, 103, 112, 119, 124, 126)

- (5) There are some inconsistencies in the way that homework is marked and used to support learning.

(Paragraph 15, 109)

- (6) There are some missed opportunities for the development of the pupils spiritual awareness.

(Paragraphs 90, 96)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	114
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	56

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	27	52	30	2	0	0
Percentage	3	24	45	26	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	661
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	15

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	151

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	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.7
National comparative data	8.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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



### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	70	54	124

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	62	64
	Girls	45	44	44
	Total	96	106	108
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (75)	85 (74)	88 (77)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 (40)	58 (43)	52 (42)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	52	63
	Girls	40	34	45
	Total	91	86	108
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (69)	69 (75)	87 (78)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (35)	29 (50)	56 (48)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	62	56	118

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	33	61	62
	Girls	37	55	55
	Total	70	116	117
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	59 (62)	98 (93)	99 (97)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43.8 (42.0)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	657
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	36.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.9

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	322

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	20.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.84
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.48

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.14
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	35	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	1,858,487
Total expenditure	1,837,928
Expenditure per pupil	2,881
Balance brought forward from previous year	78,360
Balance carried forward to next year	98,919



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

Number of questionnaires sent out

723

Number of questionnaires returned

213

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	56	11	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	59	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	60	5	5	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	61	17	3	3
The teaching is good.	28	61	5	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	46	25	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	44	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	42	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	22	48	20	4	6
The school is well led and managed.	37	47	5	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	57	6	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	48	5	4	18

### Other issues raised by parents

No other issues were raised.

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

### **ENGLISH AND DRAMA**

Overall, provision in English and drama is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Pupils attain above-average standards in national tests at the age of 14 years.
- Good teaching challenges and extends pupils' understanding successfully.
- Good planning of lessons provides a range of different activities which sustain pupils' interest and hold their attention well.
- Pupils behave very well and show enthusiasm for learning.
- Good leadership and management have improved the effectiveness of teaching.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Advice given to help pupils improve their written work is not precise enough.
- Teaching of spelling is not given the priority it needs to help pupils advance their skills as rapidly as they could.

#### **Standards and achievement**

49. National test results for 14-year-olds are above average overall, with three-quarters of all pupils attaining at or above the expected Level 5 and over one-third gaining the higher Level 6 or above. Standards declined last year to their previous level of three years ago, in contrast to mathematics and science, which rose. Following national trends, in 2001, girls did better than boys, although the gap narrowed as boys improved in the same period. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In comparison with similar schools, results are average.
50. Results in GCSE English and English Literature are average, both for standards reached overall and for the proportion of those attaining the higher grades A\*-C. Again, girls did better than boys, and the difference closely matched national trends. At the same time, standards reached are below those of most other subjects taken in the school. Over three years, standards have fluctuated, rising before falling most recently, but still matching national averages. Valid comparisons with standards reported in the last inspection cannot be made because a low proportion of pupils was entered then for GCSE examinations. Subsequently, the school has made sure that all pupils take part. Drama standards in 2001 were well above average, with four out of five pupils attaining the higher grades A\*-C.
51. By age 14, attainment in work seen continues above the expected standard. This is because good leadership of the subject has ensured that lessons challenge pupils well, while retaining their interest and enthusiasm. Over three years, pupils make good progress to reach above-average standards, having entered the school with average standards.
52. In Years 7 to 9, pupils learn well to write letters, short stories, advertisements, analyses of novels and plays, as well as to give lively accounts from personal experience. Their self-confident expression is evident whether describing the escape of a pet hamster, analysing an extract from 'Oliver Twist' or writing a detailed but amusing letter of complaint to the proprietor of Fawltly Towers'. Pupils write acceptably, using the

normal conventions of punctuation, sentence structure and paragraphs to explain their ideas clearly in finished work. At the same time, most pupils' spelling skills are below nationally expected levels and do not equal other stronger aspects of their writing. This is because teachers have not yet developed sufficiently effective methods to tackle their spelling difficulties. Girls' written work is better than boys.

53. Pupils think analytically about what they have read; explaining and applying technical concepts independently, for instance by identifying accurately examples of alliteration, imagery and rhyme in a poem. As they move through the school, those at all levels of attainment answer questions shrewdly, discuss ideas willingly, and explain thoroughly their understanding of what they have read. Both boys and girls speak and listen to each other with clarity, assurance and interest, whether working together as a small group or participating in discussion with the whole class. In one very good lesson, for example, they demonstrated well-honed ability to read, think for themselves and to apply their knowledge practically by collaborating in small groups to present dramatically the appearance of Banquo's ghost in 'Macbeth'. In drama, with a similar text, they worked very well together; sharing ideas and taking decisions autonomously in small groups, to present short scenes and develop convincing dramatic characters. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of teaching which is sensitive to their needs and the work of additional staff in the classroom.
54. In their final two years in school, standards are above those expected overall, and an improvement on the standards revealed in the 2001 GCSE examinations. This is a result of more thorough teaching and planning of lessons. Pupils write successfully in contrasting forms such as letters, reports and imaginary accounts. They read a good variety of plays, novels, poetry and short stories with understanding. Most demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the texts they study and write about them with insight and authority. For example, higher-attaining pupils analysed the roles of Fanny and Bathsheba in Thomas Hardy's 'Far from the Madding Crowd', explaining their individual motivation and relationships to Sergeant Troy before drawing out deeper considerations of the ways in which the three characters reflect aspects of Victorian society's assumptions about women.
55. In drama, all pupils learn well to understand and communicate challenging texts. For example, pupils acted passages from Shakespeare vividly, with well-inflected reading voices and expressive body language. They take this further in response to good questioning, by making constructive and helpful comments on each other's work. They extend their own understanding by working out performance techniques to interest younger pupils in the play.
56. Pupils with special educational needs do well. Their enthusiasm and application is a product of stimulating, well-planned teaching which enables them to acquire a thorough knowledge of the texts they have studied. They are also supported well by additional staff in classrooms, who help individuals to learn effectively by offering them helpful individual explanations and encouragement. In their final year, lower-attaining pupils write in simple, well-organised sentences, although spelling is weak. Pupils make good use of the small library, which is attractively laid out and very well organised, promoting rapidly their interest in reading for pleasure and information. Pupils make good use of computers to carry out research, and to order their own ideas, before presenting them logically to the reader.
57. Pupils' very good behaviour in lessons underpins an atmosphere of seriousness, enthusiasm and interest in learning. It also manifests itself in the high quality of discussion and pride in presentation of written work. This is generated and sustained

by interesting and varied classroom activities, which challenge, and stimulate their curiosity well.

### **Quality of education**

58. Teaching is good overall, with a high proportion that is very good, and none less than sound. Teachers use very good subject knowledge to question pupils in class, first checking what they know, before using follow-up questions skilfully to extend their knowledge further. They plan lessons very well, holding pupils' interest and concentration with varied activities, humour and vigorous prompting, always making sure that both boys and girls are equally challenged by the work set. Teachers also encourage boys successfully to do as well as girls by stimulating them with well-focussed questioning, clear explanations and opportunities for friendly competition. They mark written work conscientiously, although opportunities are missed to help younger pupils at the early stages of drafting written work to apply their knowledge of spelling and layout conventions. Although teachers' efforts to correct spelling and secure knowledge of common rules are starting to take effect, they are so far not focussed enough to enable pupils reach their full potential. In drama, lessons are organised well so that pupils are helped to co-operate effectively in groups and to make constructive suggestions about each other's work, which reaches good standards in consequence.

### **Leadership and management**

59. The team of specialist teachers is led well by a subject leader who has made considerable improvements since the last inspection. Effective analysis has been made of the strengths and weaknesses of pupils on entry to the school, and by useful and detailed checks on their subsequent progress. The information gleaned has enabled the team to improve teaching methods that give pupils help where it is most needed. As a result, the performance of boys has improved, and the general weaknesses in writing of younger pupils are being tackled beneficially.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

60. Standards of literacy are satisfactory across the school. They are better in work in English as there is greater care taken to ensure that pupils increase their accuracy in spelling and grammar. The school has taken realistic initial steps to improve the teaching of literacy across the subjects, by using thoughtfully the lessons of current national initiatives, and involving teachers in training and encouraging them to analyse the particular challenges of their own subject. Improvements in teaching and learning are evident because a priority has been given to teaching pupils to use technical words by displaying them on classroom walls. Particularly successful has been the promotion of reading for pleasure and for information in the learning resources centre and library, which has been developed well by a recently-appointed member of staff in charge. Pupils use computers suitably to draft and redraft their material. Here, they improve their presentation deftly, refining their thinking well as they make skilful use of the layout capabilities of word-processing facilities. Geography, history, music, physical education and science teachers refer to, and emphasise, technical language well. In mathematics, pupils write up and explain their investigations logically. In design and technology, listening and note-taking skills are developed well, but this is sometimes at the expense of other skills in extended writing.
61. Although the quality of speaking and listening is generally good, standards of writing, apart from in English, fall short of expectations, especially on entry to the school. In this



respect, there are insufficient opportunities or challenges for pupils to write at length to consolidate, to develop and to communicate their understanding of what they have learned. Spelling is a particular weakness because teachers do not emphasise firmly enough the need to use conventional forms. In personal and social education, for example, there are too many instances of spelling errors being ignored or even corrected wrongly. The development of the teaching of writing across the subjects remains a significant challenge for future development.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The overall quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- National Curriculum test and GCSE results are well above the national average.
- Teaching is good and this results in effective learning and good achievement.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and want to learn.
- The department is well led with all staff committed to raising standards.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The teaching of numeracy is not properly co-ordinated across the school.

### **Standards and achievement**

62. Results in the 2001 national tests for 14-year-olds were well above the national average for all schools and for similar schools. They were similar to the results obtained by the same pupils in science and above those obtained in English. These results point to good achievement when judged against pupils' standards on entry to the school. Standards at the age of 14 have improved steadily since the last inspection, in line with the national trend. GCSE results in 2001 were significantly above the national average. There has been a rise in the percentage of pupils attaining A\*-C grades with many more pupils attaining A\* and A grades. Standards in the GCSE examinations have improved significantly since the last inspection. There was no overall difference between the results of boys and those of girls.
63. The overall standard of work seen in lessons and in pupils' folders is above the national expectation at the end of Years 9 and 11. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection. By the end of Year 9, the most able pupils reach high standards in algebra and geometry. In algebra, they solve linear and simultaneous equations and construct and interpret linear graphs accurately. In geometry, they show a good understanding of Pythagoras Theorem. Some lower-attaining pupils have just basic number and graphical skills: they use the number rules well to solve simple problems. These pupils also undertake surveys using tally charts and bar charts confidently to represent data. By the end of Year 11 almost all pupils have secure number and measurement skills. They have become more confident and accurate in the use of fractions, decimals and percentages. They calculate accurately the perimeters, areas and volumes of a variety of rectilinear and circular shapes using metric measures. Higher-attaining pupils solve complicated problems on probability. They follow their own lines of enquiry when conducting investigations, generalising their results and justifying their conclusions. These pupils reach very high standards.
64. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and are keen to do well. They are attentive and work diligently in lessons and this assists their learning and progress. Their good response to questioning enables them to clarify their understanding and increase their

confidence. In the great majority of lessons, pupils' relationships with their teachers are positive and constructive, and this contributes to a good working atmosphere in lessons. A few pupils persist in impeding the learning of others.

### **Quality of education**

65. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teachers prepare lessons at an appropriate level and use methods suited to the needs of their pupils. By asking questions and using appropriate examples, they help pupils to understand new topics and learn new methods. For example, in a Year 7 lesson pupils were introduced to algebra by the teacher, substituting letters for numbers in a variety of elementary examples. This enabled pupils to familiarise themselves with simple algebraic formulae. They then demonstrated this knowledge by correctly answering a selection of similar examples. Good progress was made and pupils achieved a sound foundation from which to develop their understanding of algebra. In other lessons, resources are used effectively to promote learning. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils using graph paper and tracing paper to reflect and rotate shapes about different lines and points found the new co-ordinates for some quite challenging transformations. This practical work helped them to understand the concepts and to appreciate the associated algebraic methods. Good quick-fire practice of mental mathematics at the beginning of lessons improves pupils' accuracy in solving mental problems. Teachers work well with pupils with special educational needs and, with the able support of learning assistants, ensure that they are fully included in lessons. Most teachers mark and assess pupils' work well. The marking enables pupils to correct their mistakes and tackle new work more confidently. Homework is used effectively by most teachers. Evidence from earlier work shows that pupils at all levels are making good progress over time.

### **Leadership and management**

66. The department is well led and managed. Good relationships exist between staff, all of whom are committed to raising standards. Setting arrangements work to the advantage of all pupils. The monitoring of teaching and the curriculum is satisfactory. Books and resources are sufficient and of good quality.
67. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. GCSE results have improved significantly, particularly in relation to the proportion of high grades attained. Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 have improved in line with the national trend. Teaching is now good in the vast majority of lessons with no unsatisfactory lessons seen. Information and communication technology is used more effectively to support learning, and this has been effective in raising the numeracy standards of lower-attaining pupils. The department's development plan is now much more focused and provides a good programme for improvement.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

68. Pupils enter the school with standards of numeracy that are just above average. They make good progress as they move through the school, not only in mathematics lessons but also by using numeracy in some other subjects. For example, in science, they substitute in formulae, solve equations using moments, and perform calculations and measurements emphasising the correct units. They also tabulate results and represent them by bar charts, graphs and lines of best fit. In geography, they use flow diagrams, graphs and bar charts to good effect. In history, they use their knowledge of

number well in calculating population growth. In physical education, they measure distances for throwing and jumping events and calculate heart and recovery rates accurately. In information and communication technology, they estimate angles for bearings confidently, and use tally charts and bar charts appropriately to represent data they have collected. In design and technology they use scale drawings well for prototypes, numerically analyse questionnaires and display the results clearly in bar and pie charts. In these and other subjects, pupils' numeracy skills contribute well to their progress, although in some subjects, opportunities are missed to make more use of these skills. The mathematics department has now included the National Numeracy Strategy in its schemes of work and it is now being implemented satisfactorily within the department. However, it is not yet fully effective in all other departments.

## SCIENCE

Overall the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Standards of attainment are very high by the end of Year 9.
- Pupils make very good progress from Year 7 to Year 9.
- Very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 leads to rapid advances in scientific understanding.
- The new head of department provides very effective leadership.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment is not used well enough to raise standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11.
- Information and communication technology is not used enough to support pupils' learning.

### Standards and achievement

69. Overall attainment in science is good. By the end of Year 9, standards in science are well above national expectations, with boys and girls reaching comparable standards. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 6 and above is above the national average. These very high standards have been a steady feature over the past three years.
70. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, an average proportion of pupils gained grades A\*-C. In the same year, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\* and A was above national figures, as was the percentage gaining grades A\*-G. Standards at GCSE have declined over recent years, mainly as a result of staff absence.
71. In lessons and work seen, attainment is well above national expectations at the end of Year 9 and a little above average by the end of Year 11. Attainment of boys and girls is similar. During Years 7 to 9, pupils rapidly improve their knowledge, skills and understanding of all aspects of science. For example, pupils develop a thorough knowledge of inheritance and clearly distinguish between the genetic make-up of identical and non-identical twins. Pupils gain a very good understanding of forces that enables them to understand and calculate moments around a fulcrum. Practical skills are very well developed and pupils have a clear concept of a fair test. They make informed predictions. In experiments, results are accurately measured, recorded, and expressed correctly as graphs. Pupils interpret their findings critically and report on the accuracy of their predictions.

72. During Years 10 and 11, many pupils continue to improve their knowledge and skills. For example, higher-attaining pupils show a very good knowledge of different types of rocks and their chemical qualities. They show a clear understanding of the origin of the different rock types and how they are affected by weathering. Elsewhere, lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs predict the chemical and physical properties of elements from their position in the periodic table. Pupils of average attainment do not always show such secure knowledge. For example, they know the basic process of breathing, but their understanding of respiration and the link between respiration and breathing is not secure. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 attain well in practical work. Pupils plan complex experiments to test scientific ideas. They collect a good range of data and repeat tests to verify outcomes. They analyse accurately the data they have collected and come to clear conclusions about their findings. They make an informed evaluation of their experimental technique and suggest sensible ways of extending their studies.
73. Pupils' numeracy skills are developed well in science through accurate measurement, effective use of graphs formulae and equations. Literacy skills are developed satisfactorily through the use of key words. There is some good use in Years 7 to 9 of a variety of writing styles. There are some good examples of the use of information and communication technology, for example when researching elements, but overall there are too few opportunities to use computers to extend learning in science.
74. Pupils' overall achievement in science is satisfactory. When entering the school their science skills are average, although pupils in the current Years 7 and 8 entered the school with below-average skills. During Years 7 to 9 pupils make rapid progress in improving their skills as a result of good teaching. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make this same very good progress.
75. Higher-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, continue this good progress during Years 10 and 11. The remainder makes less progress than would be expected on the basis of their results in the National Curriculum tests as a result of unsatisfactory teaching and the negative attitudes of a minority of pupils towards science.

## Quality of education

76. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is very good in Years 7 to 9 with four out of five lessons being good or very good. During Years 10 and 11 teaching overall is unsatisfactory. Although two out of three lessons are satisfactory or good, one out of three lessons is unsatisfactory. A very good feature of all lessons is teachers' subject knowledge, which enables pupils to learn accurate skills and knowledge and to extend their understanding of science. In the best lessons, pupils are well motivated and very interested because the level of challenge is very high. In these lessons, pupils gain a great deal of knowledge and understanding because expectations for the quality and depth of work are very high. Here, pupils are very productive and cover a lot of work because the lesson is taught at a rapid pace. In these very good lessons, a wide variety of skills is rapidly developed through very well-planned activities that make very good use of resources. In those lessons where learning is unsatisfactory, pupils do not cover sufficient work at the right depth because the teachers' expectations are too low. Furthermore, pupils are not sufficiently engaged or motivated by the teaching and they lose concentration, chatter and drift off task. Overall, books are marked well and some have many useful comments to show how pupils can improve; but this is not consistent. Homework is a strong feature of pupils' work in all lessons and teachers ensure that it reinforces and develops class work.
77. Pupils' attitudes in science are satisfactory. Relationships are good. Pupils take pride in their written work and drawings are of a high quality. Overall behaviour is satisfactory, but background chatter is hindering learning in a significant minority of lessons in Years 10 and 11.
78. Science makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding of social issues. For example, pupils learn about the effects of alcohol abuse in a module on microbes. Assessment is well established but the results of tests are not always used effectively in Year 10 and 11 to inform pupils of their progress towards their expected grades and this contributes, in part, to the under-achievement of some of them.

## Leadership and management

79. After the last inspection, the department was slow to respond to the issues raised. There remain a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and deficiencies in the development of monitoring. However, the leadership and management of the recently appointed head of department are very good. Already the strengths of the department and areas for improvement have been critically identified and a clear action plan written to address these issues. These plans are appropriate and realistic. Already, the enthusiasm and energy of leadership and management are having a positive impact on raising standards in science. Some issues raised in the last report remain unresolved.

## ART AND DESIGN

The overall provision for art is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 results in high attainment and achievement.
- A good range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils helps to improve the quality of their coursework.
- The rich range of media in which pupils work enables all to succeed well.

### Areas for improvement

- Attainment is affected when classes are taught in non-specialist accommodation by non-specialist teachers.
- There are too few opportunities for students to use information and communication technology to develop their work.
- There are not enough opportunities for written work, for example through the extended use of sketchbooks.

### Standards and achievement

80. Pupils' attainment in GCSE in recent years has been well above average, with an unusually high proportion of A\* and A grades. Results were very high in 2001, with pupils mostly gaining higher grades in art than in their other subjects.
81. When pupils enter the school their attainment in art is broadly average. Boys and girls generally progress well to Year 9, but not all develop skills, knowledge and understanding as well as pupils in Years 10 and 11, because many do not have the benefit of specialist teaching. When they do, pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 is also very good, but some in current GCSE groups who were not taught by a specialist before Year 10 did not progress so well. Standards and achievement differ between classes as early as Year 7, where skills in one class in drawing vegetables and fruit from observation were above average, and another class doing a graphics lettering project were average. Similar disparity was observed between a Year 9 class doing a project based on the visual properties of rocks and crystals, where attainment was above average and one engaged in a project making three-dimensional masks, where standards were average. The school has tried unsuccessfully to recruit another specialist, but pupils do not currently experience equality of opportunity in this regard. This staffing position, when combined with unsatisfactory accommodation in an old mobile classroom, detracts from many pupils' quality of experience in Years 7 to 9 and has adverse effects on their curriculum, progress and attitudes. In general, though, standards are above average by the end of Year 9, mostly because of the very good progress many boys have made, taking their attainment to above average for boys.
82. An above-average proportion of pupils takes art to GCSE. It is a popular subject, partly because pupils know they will be successful in their examination, but also because many experience very good teaching in their earlier years, enjoying the subject greatly and recognising how much they develop their personal expressiveness through art. The current option system leads to very unbalanced groups for GCSE - some very small, others very large, some predominantly boys, others mixed. Attainment differs across these groups, for example in the current Year 10, where one small group's standards are broadly in line with the range of expectations and the larger, mixed group's are above average. Some pupils are much further along the road towards

proficiency with core skills, painting and drawing, for example, than others. These pupils are well able to deploy their skills independently and creatively in the GCSE curriculum. Others rapidly catch up and by the end of Year 10 all pupils have done a great deal of individual exploration across a rich range of media, discovering techniques and material in which they can become very successful and creative. All pupils know how to develop effective visual explorations as preparation work for final pieces of two- or three-dimensional work.

83. In Year 11, a significant acceleration in pupils' progress occurs. Here, their work matures considerably and begins to show very good synthesis of all the theory and practical skills. They use a wide range of ideas, sometimes from other cultures' art styles, often designing their work to be realised in unusual media such as calico hangings, metalwork etc, sometimes in very large scale. Examination work in Year 11 shows this commendably wide range, reflecting pupils' individual creative competence. Because work develops so individually, all pupils' achievement in art is very good in Years 10 and 11, with the work of those with special educational needs seldom distinguishable from that of their peers. By the end of Year 11 standards are well above average.

### **Quality of education**

84. Teaching is always satisfactory and most is very good. The best teaching is based on very secure subject knowledge and understanding, which the teacher combines with excellent knowledge of examination requirements to ensure that all pupils learn well, especially in Years 10 and 11. Lessons for younger pupils are well structured, with introductions targeted on developing key skills. Pupils have an appropriate amount of time for activity, during which most benefit from very good, well targeted one-to-one sessions with their teacher. Here, the teacher provides very effective encouragement. Good advice and support given to pupils helps them to improve their work. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop written work. Pupils include good visual references to the work of artists they have researched and studied, but they do not use sketchbooks enough to support their work. Less effective teaching is always satisfactory, but lacks the degree of subject knowledge that underpins the very good specialist teaching. Assessment of attainment in GCSE course work is accurate, so pupils know where they are and how to raise their grades. The teachers' assessments in Year 9 over-estimate the standards reached.

### **Leadership and management**

85. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has identified the shortcomings in the department's provision very clearly and the school is now doing all it can to improve staffing and accommodation for art. The department lacks appropriate information and communication technology equipment because of deficiencies in accommodation. This means that pupils do not regard computers as media for creative explorations; this situation needs to be improved urgently. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The overall quality of provision in design and technology is **excellent**.

### Strengths

- Pupils reach high standards in all aspects of the subject as a result of effective teaching.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject and shared commitment to improve are very good.
- Effective assessment and monitoring arrangements inform pupils well about their attainment and progress.
- There is very good use of information and communication technology, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

### Areas for improvement

- There is not enough formal co-ordination between the two departments in order to share best practices and harmonise procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' work.
- There is not enough emphasis on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the pupils' work.

### Standards and achievement

86. Overall, standards are very good. Pupils enter the school with below national average standards. By the time they reach the end of Year 9 standards are well above average with most pupils reaching the expected standard, however. Boys and girls perform equally well. The 2001 GCSE results show that a well-above-average proportion of pupils attains grades A\*-C. A well above average proportion of pupils obtain A\* and A grades in the GCSE examinations. Pupils do best in resistant materials, electronics, food and textiles. Boys and girls perform equally well. Whilst there is no formal arrangement to recognise able and talented pupils, the excellent teaching methods enable talented pupils to progress faster and to realise their full potential.
87. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. They are integrated well in lessons and receive extra assistance from the teachers both in lessons and outside normal school hours. Pupils with statements of special educational need are given good help by learning support assistants in some lessons. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs varies, but the standards reached by some are as good and sometimes better than other pupils.
88. The overall standard of learning is very good and excellent in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, pupils receive well-planned lessons in which they learn to design and make a very good range of products using wood, plastic, metal, textile and food materials. They learn to use simple mechanisms, electronics, structures and control well. In lessons in food technology, pupils learn very well about the importance of hygiene and how to investigate and compare food products and vary basic recipes. All pupils learn effectively the basic principles of safety and about different methods of production. The effectiveness of the projects is a result of the way they involve a wide range of materials, skills and methods of designing and making.
89. Most pupils learn very well in Years 10 and 11 by taking one or more of the GCSE courses in electronics, graphics, food technology, resistant materials and textiles. In addition, some pupils take the successful course in child development. Pupils learn more advanced skills by undertaking a range of interesting small design-and-make projects in Year 10 and a major project in Year 11. This combination enables pupils at



all levels of attainment to progress at their own pace, and for the most able to reach very high standards. Pupils discuss the methods of manufacture of what they make and give presentations of their findings to the whole class extremely well. The course work completed in Year 11 shows that the standard of presentation and the technical complexity of the projects is very high.

### **Quality of education**

90. The overall standard of teaching is very good and excellent in Years 10 and 11. All teachers are very experienced, have worked together for many years and some have had experience of applying technology in industry. They have an excellent knowledge of the subject, plan lessons with great care and use effective teaching methods. They all gain the interest of pupils by giving clear and very good introductions to lessons and effective demonstrations of the work to be done. Teachers are confident and relaxed and, as a result, their relationships with pupils are very good. They are very effective in helping pupils revise for examinations. There is not enough support given to pupils to develop their understanding of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their work: some good contributions are made but there are missed opportunities in many lessons. In the food and textile department, information and communication technology is not used enough to improve presentation and help with analysis. Teachers have made a good start on implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies and a good booklet on a strategy for literacy has been produced.
91. Pupils have good opportunities to continue learning outside normal school hours in extra-curricular activities. Good open-access workshops are available in craft, design and technology and in textiles, which enables pupils from all years to continue with their project work after school. Pupils from all years prepare to enter the Young Engineer Robot Challenge competition. They organise themselves into groups to work on the engineering, design, electronics, communications and weapons aspects of the robot and make good progress.

### **Leadership and management**

92. The departments of craft, design and technology and of food and textiles are very well led by two very experienced and effective teachers who share with their colleagues a strong commitment to improve. There is a very good working relationship between the two departments. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. The two departments are housed in two different parts of the school, which inhibits close working arrangements. The department of food and textiles does not have ready access to computers in Years 7 to 9. Much has been achieved in both departments since the last inspection and overall improvements have been good. Attainment of pupils and the standard of teaching have improved. Modern equipment has been introduced in the department of craft, design and technology.

## GEOGRAPHY

The overall provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Effective teaching methods make learning interesting and enjoyable.
- The very good conduct of pupils within lessons results in positive relationships and attitudes and enhances both learning and teaching.

### What could be improved

- Teaching and learning are not always monitored closely enough.
- Good practice in teaching is not shared sufficiently.
- The use of information and communication technology is limited.

### Standards and achievement

93. Overall standards in the GCSE examination in 2001 were just above average as was the proportion of students attaining grades A\*-C. Over the last four years results have fluctuated but have never dropped below the national average since the last inspection. All have attained a pass grade over the past six years. Boys do well, with results above those of boys nationally. Girls do less well, however, but their results show a sustained trend of improvement over time. Both higher-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs do well. A third of pupils at the most recent examinations attained grades A\*-B and no pupil achieved the lowest grade. Compared with other subjects in the school, attainment is average. The most recent teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate a slight drop in standards with fewer pupils reaching expected levels. Pupils' work, however, shows satisfactory progress from Year 7 to 9. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are currently working to new schemes of work, which are noticeably raising standards.
94. Pupils at the end of Year 11 reach satisfactory standards overall. They listen well in lessons, consolidating their knowledge, they think carefully and most provide accurate, if brief, oral explanations. They work together well and share resources. The majority use subject vocabulary well in discussion, less so in written work. Pupils' knowledge of the subject is satisfactory. They discuss indicators of development well and describe interdependence. The written work of all but the highest-attaining pupils shows insufficient in-depth analysis of information, limited conclusions and brief evaluation. Previous coursework indicates that fieldwork skills are good and pupils use primary and secondary data effectively. Pupils in Year 11, particularly lower-attaining pupils, rely too much on photocopied notes and do not have enough experience in practising examination questions. The in-depth, careful, well-illustrated extended writing of some pupils is indicative of the quality of work possible. Unfortunately, the work of a significant number of pupils contains many basic errors. Not all pupils recognise weaknesses in this area; those who do make little effort to correct them. This inevitably results in some underachievement, especially in GCSE coursework. The conduct of these senior pupils in lessons is very good.
95. Pupils at the end of Year 9 reach satisfactory standards. Although the quality of their writing reflects their earlier levels of attainment, most pupils are successful in providing facts, but less so in giving reasons. In lessons, the majority of pupils give brief but correct answers. Pupils with special educational needs make a commendable effort in lessons and in their written work. All pupils work together and willingly share

resources. Higher-attaining pupils make rapid progress in all years. These pupils acquire a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, which they apply effectively to new learning experiences. All pupils read, extract and use information from secondary sources. Pupils know, but have to be prompted to use, geographical vocabulary. Their acquisition and application of basic skills is variable in Years 7 to 8; it is better in Year 9. There is some carelessness in the presentation of work. Not all pupils are familiar with the contents of an atlas. Pupils' written work at the end of Year 9 shows a good grasp of rivers and coastlines and the impact these have on human activities. Information and communication technology is not used enough by pupils to enhance their work. The conduct and attitudes of all pupils are very good.

### **Quality of education**

96. The overall quality of teaching is good. Good planning allows a wide range of activities and opportunities for independent learning. This, together with good organisational skills and challenging questioning, features in very good lessons. Teachers use effective ways to develop skills in thinking, particularly decision making and empathy, for example creating a context whereby pupils appreciate the reasons why a Kenyan schoolboy thinks about moving from his village to the city. The use of videos to extend and illustrate explanations is good. Teachers occasionally miss opportunities to draw attention to spiritual concepts and moral, social and cultural issues. Teachers' support of pupils is good. Well-targeted praise and encouragement boosts confidence, especially that of lower-attaining pupils. The good relationships enjoyed within the classroom create a positive learning environment. Explanation is often good, but in a minority of lessons, particularly where pupils ask searching questions and seek clarification, teachers' responses indicate some insecurity of subject knowledge. Teachers encourage pupils to use information and communication technology for homework and assessments but infrequently apply it to whole-class activities. Marking is supportive but not enough detailed guidance is given to pupils about improving their work. The standard of marking is inconsistent, with mistakes relating to geographical content and the application of skills, including literacy, being missed.

### **Leadership and management**

97. The department is satisfactorily led and managed. This is a department that has endured staffing difficulties in the past. The appointment of a specialist teacher in charge is already making a difference in standards of attainment especially in Years 7 to 9. The position of the teacher in charge of geography is weakened by the fact that she does not have responsibility for monitoring of teaching. The consequence of this is that teachers work in isolation from one another and are not supported in sharing good practice in teaching geography. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good. The application of information and communication technology remains an area of slow growth with resources just satisfactory. Accommodation is substantially improved.

## HISTORY

The overall provision in history is **good**.

### Strengths

- Consistently good teaching helps pupils do well in examinations.
- The number of pupils choosing the history option is increasing significantly.

### Areas for development

- There is still insufficient information and communication technology work done despite the improvement over the past two years.

### Standards and achievement

98. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average and they make good progress. At the end of Year 9, pupils meet national expectations. In 2001, standards in GCSE examinations were very high, although the numbers entered were small. This pattern has been repeated for the past three years, but history is now becoming a popular option for pupils of all levels of attainment. The proportion of A\*-A grades attained is very high. These very good examination grades are linked to the few well-motivated and high-attaining pupils who have chosen the subject. In the lessons observed and work seen during the inspection, standards are above expectations but do not match the previous very high achievement. Progress is good.
99. By the end of Year 9, pupils acquire a sound depth of knowledge and understanding. When learning about enclosures in the eighteenth century, they appreciate how drastically these changes affected society. In a Year 9 lesson, a series of pictures and extracts about Nazi Germany helped pupils understand that the reliability of a source is linked to its origins. The opportunity was taken for a brief discussion on the recent attack on a synagogue and the existence of anti-Semitic views. Almost all pupils produce extended writing, for which they have found information from a range of sources. Higher-attaining pupils write at length and in detail on topics that they have researched well. Pupils with special educational needs sometimes find difficulty in explaining their ideas. The work of Year 11 pupils shows similar strengths. Their knowledge is good and the majority make some links with information given in sources. Their vocabulary is wide and writing is well organised. Low-attaining pupils write descriptively with less detail and analysis. In the lessons and work seen, all pupils have the potential to obtain a grade, but the proportion of high grades is likely to be smaller than it has been.

### Quality of education

100. Almost all teaching is good. Teachers know their subject well and make it relevant by linking it to contemporary events. They have a very good knowledge of examination techniques and explain very clearly how to answer well. In Year 11, pupils understand how to use their knowledge to the fullest extent after studying marking schemes with their teacher. Lessons are well structured. When they arrive for their lesson, pupils often find a simple task ready for them. In a Year 7 class for example, they tried to unscramble a name whilst the teacher took the register and at the end of a lesson, a quick quiz reinforced the major points. Pupils enjoy the pace of most lessons. When lessons begin with substantial reading or writing activities, some pupils lose interest. Teachers are prompt to help individuals. Technical vocabulary is well taught and pupils

use specialist terms correctly. Useful phrases such as 'this shows us that' help pupils in Years 10 and 11 to make clear and full explanations. Such help was less evident in Years 7 to 9. Homework is regularly set and marked,

101. Pupils are interested and often enthusiastic in lessons. They behave well and maintain concentration. Occasionally, those who find reading and writing difficult are restless when these are the main activities. Pupils enjoy discussion and contribute well.

### **Leadership and management**

102. The department has undergone a number of staffing changes but is now well led and managed. However the number opting for the GCSE course is beyond the capacity of the department. The revision of the schemes of work, the adoption of a new GCSE syllabus, and the incorporation of tasks into the curriculum are proceeding well. There is a comprehensive programme of visits locally and overseas, which does much to encourage enjoyment of the subject. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in examination results, teaching and the numbers opting for history.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The overall provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths**

- Teachers have good relationships with pupils and manage them well.
- The number of computers is now almost at the national average.
- Pupils gain good skills in developing and exploring information.

### **Areas for improvement**

- There are still too few planned opportunities for pupils to use computers in several subjects.
- Assessment is not sufficiently frequent in Years 7 to 9 for pupils to be fully aware of their own progress.
- Activities do not fully meet the needs of all pupils in specific information and communication technology lessons.

### **Standards and achievement**

103. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average for girls and boys, and reflect satisfactory achievement from entry to the school due to good, supportive teaching. Teachers' assessments of Year 9 pupils' National Curriculum levels in 2001 as above average were over-generous. Standards are lower than the teachers' assessments show, as pupils have no timetabled information and communication technology lessons in Year 9. Although they reach expected levels for their age, many pupils do not achieve as well as they could, particularly where they do not have computers at home.
104. Most pupils, at all levels of attainment including those with special educational needs, gain good basic skills in specific information and communication technology lessons. They apply skills particularly well in technology lessons, but insufficiently in most other subjects. Most pupils develop and explore information well, including research on the Internet. They respond to and control events well in information and communication technology. Information and communication technology is not used enough in most subjects.

105. In lessons and work seen, Year 7 pupils develop good basic information and communication technology skills and, in French, write about themselves, integrating their text with graphics attractively. Year 8 pupils enter prices of foods from a shopping list into a spreadsheet. Year 8 pupils taking resistant materials, design attractive labels and information for a plant pot moisture tester, which they previously made using appropriate software. Year 9 pupils use desktop publishing capably to produce advertisements. Overall standards by the end of Year 9 meet national expectations, but are still not as high as they could be, particular for higher-attaining pupils.
106. By the end of Year 11, standards are average. Although there are currently no GCSE entries, all of the year group, including pupils with special educational needs, are entered for nationally accredited key skills awards in 2002. In previous years, only a small percentage of the year group took GCSE.
107. Standards in Year 10 and 11 lessons and work seen are average, and most pupils make satisfactory progress over time. Year 10 pupils use the Internet effectively to explore and handle data, and produce attractive web pages for an artist of their choice. Year 11 pupils prepare business documents to a good standard. They use spreadsheets to produce accurate graphs of temperature and rainfall, which they merge into their memoranda. Although Year 11 pupils meet national key skills requirements, higher-attaining pupils do not achieve as much as they could, for example, in creating and evaluating spreadsheet models.

### **Quality of education**

108. The overall quality of teaching is good in lessons designated to teaching information and communication technology. The three Year 7 and 8 lessons seen were good. Teachers related well to pupils and helped to develop pupils' knowledge and skill in a calm working atmosphere. Interesting topics helped pupils to work on their own in a variety of applications. The teachers' use of demonstration, by controlling pupils' machines remotely in order to show them routines before they practised them, was very effective, as it helped pupils to integrate text and graphics well when they designed a powerpoint presentation to show their favourite animals.
109. Apart from technology, where teachers have good expertise in information and communication technology, few other subjects apart from English regularly use computers in lessons, particularly in Year 9 because, although teachers have had appropriate training, computers are not always easily available. The assessment of pupils' work in information and communication technology skills in other subjects is better co-ordinated than at the time of the last inspection. Homework is not set often enough to consolidate basic theory and design skill. Pupils' work is constructively and regularly marked, so pupils are clear about progress made, and what to do to improve.
110. All pupils, including those with special needs, use equipment safely and responsibly. Most are good at working on their own and improve their work effectively through good support from teachers, who relate well to pupils. Pupils behave well and most concentrate well on their work. Several work in their lunch hour, when teachers are available for help. Most pupils co-operate very well with teachers, support each other well and behave very well.
111. There are too few planned opportunities for pupils to develop their skills. Problems of teacher recruitment in some subjects have made it difficult to address fully issues from the last inspection, but training for teachers and learning support assistants is beginning to bear fruit. In design and technology lessons, pupils successfully use

computer-aided design and manufacture software; they cut out their own attractive designs. English teachers help pupils use word-processing well to develop their literacy and drafting skills in GCSE coursework. In science, pupils do not yet use data-loggers to manipulate and measure data because of shortages of equipment. Most pupils have home computers and use them well for word-processing and research on websites for GCSE homework tasks.

### **Leadership and management**

112. The subject is well led and managed. Assessment of pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection, although further refinement is needed, particularly in Years 7 to 9. An excellent network manager deals with machine faults promptly and helped plan further changes in electric cabling and the location of equipment. Resources have improved significantly in the last year; computer numbers are now nearly in line with the national average. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department is well placed to support further development in the school with planned additional staffing, monitoring and training.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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

#### **Strengths**

- The department has improved well since the last inspection.
- The good resources are used effectively.
- Homework is used well to support the pupils' learning.
- Boys attain better than they do nationally.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- There are some weaknesses in the management of pupils' behaviour in lessons.
- The teaching time allocation for two languages in Year 9 is too low.

### **Standards and achievement**

113. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average. This reflects strongly the teacher assessments reported in 2000 and 2001, which are based on performance in French. Boys generally achieve more highly than boys nationally: this too is reflected in the school's reported results. Boys are generally willing to answer oral questions in class and take an active part: their lack of inhibition in speaking enables them to improve their accent and grammatical accuracy without feeling self-conscious. However, boys and girls reach comparable standards. By the end of Year 9, pupils make up conversations about clothing, which they willingly read out to the class. They give information about colours, size and price and readily engage in role-play. Lower-achieving pupils talk about the weather, though their memories are often weak and they need reminders about the vocabulary; they volunteer answers readily. In German, pupils talk about their daily routines. Generally, pupils are more confident in talking about facts than in expressing their opinions and views. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, ably supported by adults in the classroom who understand their needs and who have sufficient expertise in French to support them with the linguistic content of the lesson.

114. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are average. Pupils understand the gist of what they see and hear and they locate specific details in the conversations. The

authentic situations on the French video clips help to set the context and pupils respond positively to this listening task. They conduct role-plays at a hotel, the post office and the tourist office. Their spoken French and German is readily understood. The inspection took place immediately prior to the GCSE speaking tests when higher-attaining pupils were endeavouring to include reference to past, present and future actions, to use compound sentences and to personalise their answers in order to maximise their chances of a high GCSE grade. Higher-attaining pupils try to create a cohesive piece of writing, though some remain reluctant to offer their opinions. Lower-attaining pupils tend to use simple linguistic structures, with which they feel confident. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C is higher than the national average, and this is particularly so in the case of boys. In relation to pupils' attainment prior to arrival in the school this represents good progress. However, the proportion achieving grades A\*-C in both French and German has improved in the last four years.

### **Quality of education**

115. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, though in individual classes there are good and very good features. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the linguistic competence of all the teachers in the department, all of whom use the foreign language for a significant part of the lesson as an effective means of communication. Although the length of lessons is long for language learning, teachers plan their lessons thoughtfully, ensuring that pupils' learning is progressive. They use a good variety of teaching methods, which they link to the perceived needs of their pupils. During the inspection week a significant amount of homework was set: the tasks were well chosen to provide continuity and consolidation of pupils' learning in class. Teachers have familiarised themselves closely with the requirements of the GCSE: much of the learning in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection was appropriately geared to the preparation of materials for the oral component. However, these positive aspects are affected by others that have a negative aspect on pupils' learning. In several classes across the age range examples were seen of poor relationships between the teacher and pupils which led to inadequate behaviour management and, in one case, confrontation. Constant undercurrents of private conversations in a number of lessons had an adverse impact on the atmosphere for learning in the class, especially when pupils need to listen to an oral stimulus in order to glean information. A negative and critical approach to pupils' attitudes and learning at the beginning of a lesson created ill-feeling and demotivation. Generally pupils' understanding of their learning and of what they need to do to improve is good. Their attitudes to the subject are good and overall behaviour is satisfactory.
116. French is the only language taught in Year 7. German is introduced in Year 8 to two classes which continue to study both languages until the end of Year 9. Pupils choose to continue with French and/or German in Years 10 and 11. Currently four pupils continue with the study of both languages, whilst 45 pupils in Years 10 and 11 are formally excused from following the National Curriculum in order to follow courses more appropriate to their needs. The teaching time for pupils studying two languages in Year 9 is inadequate.

### **Leadership and management**

117. The department is well led and managed. This good management leads to a largely cohesive department that works together effectively as a team. Relationships between teachers are good. The leadership has ensured that a good level of appropriate and helpful subject documentation is in place. The extra-curricular activities, regular visits abroad as an exchange and a visit to Normandy enhance the curriculum, as do the



practice oral sessions which teachers organise out of school hours for GCSE practice. Good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are in place and these enable teachers to match the curriculum to the needs of the pupils. Information and communication technology is well embedded in the revised schemes of work and offers pupils good opportunities to increase and reinforce their skills.

118. Improvement since the last inspection is good; much is due to the continued efforts of the head of department. The department enjoys a suite of well-equipped rooms for the vast majority of its lessons. Books, audio-visual teaching aids and other learning resources are in good supply. The department monitors GCSE attainment well, particularly the slight imbalance in performance between boys and girls. Schemes of work have been updated.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Good standards are reached at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Pupils enjoy the subject and are keen to learn.
- A large number of pupils participate in instrumental lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- Current schemes of work do not fully reflect the most recent National Curriculum requirements.
- Assessment procedures do not directly relate to the National Curriculum levels.
- Occasionally the more able musicians are not fully challenged.

119. Teacher assessments for 2001 show that, by the end of Year 9, the attainment of the majority of pupils is significantly above national expectations, with all pupils gaining Level 5 and above. However, these assessments were not carried out accurately and did not match the standard of work seen during the inspection, which was found to be lower but still above average. In GCSE examinations for 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades A\*-C was above average. All candidates entered for GCSE examinations gained A\*-G grades, which is above the national average. The music department has a good record of examination results, which have been above the national average for the last three years. Pupils achieve higher standards in music than in most other subjects in school.

120. Inspection evidence shows standards at the end of Year 9 are above average, with a few pupils achieving well above national expectations. There are no significant variations in the standards attained by boys and girls and pupils from different ethnic groups.
121. In Years 7 to 9, pupils work co-operatively in small groups combining musical elements appropriately to compose and perform descriptive music using electronic keyboards. Higher-attaining pupils have a developing vocabulary of technical musical language and can generally perform to a high standard on their chosen instrument. They compose and perform imaginative pieces, as was demonstrated by a Year 9 boy who performed an extended piece of Indian-style music on the keyboard, incorporating careful choice of keyboard voice, a rhythmical drone and well-thought-out melodic and rhythmic lines based on a raga. Lower-attaining pupils have limited performance skills and do not always accurately maintain their own part within a group performance.
122. There is some variation in pupils' attainment and previous musical knowledge when they enter the school, but generally their performance skills are above average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are presented with appropriately challenging work and achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their previous levels of attainment. A large number of instrumentalists are currently not identified within lessons and, as a result, are not always challenged and could be stretched further. There is little reference to the development of literacy or numeracy skills in planning or practice.
123. In Year 11, attainment is above the national average. Pupils are becoming good independent learners. The majority of pupils in Year 11 reach high standards in performing, as was shown by one girl who performed the song 'Nothing compares to you' by Prince. She sensitively sang the song with an awareness of musical shape and melodic phrasing. Musically talented pupils create compositions that are well structured, highly musical and genuinely inspired. This was demonstrated by a Year 11 girl, whose folio of compositions included a song describing the feelings associated with the end of a romance. She skilfully developed her theme by varying the accompaniment and building the musical emotion. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have well-developed skills in information and communication technology through good access to electronic keyboards and computer equipment with dedicated music software equipment which allows them to manipulate and develop sounds within their own simple compositions. Lower-attaining pupils are often unable to develop their ideas. They lack some basic musical skills when trying to notate their work.

### **Quality of education**

124. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and occasionally good. Teachers are enthusiastic musicians. Music teaching is characterised by good knowledge and understanding of the subject, which is used to plan lessons well. The better lessons have a variety of activities. They have good openings with clear learning objectives and usually end with a summary to reinforce learning. Teachers build pupils' confidence with effective use of praise as they circulate well to ensure that all are working hard. Some lessons occasionally overrun due to too much time being devoted to one activity. There has been an over-emphasis on the practical areas of music with not enough value given to the more theoretical aspects of the music syllabus. Pupils' folders contained very little evidence of any written work other than completed worksheets. The current teachers are trying to bring improvements. Listening is not taught well, with pupils occasionally failing to concentrate when listening to music.

There was no evidence of any marking of pupils' work in the folders inspected. Pupils learn well in instrumental lessons because teachers plan lessons using structured schemes of work to enable good progress.

125. Pupils enjoy the practical activities and participate willingly. Good relationships mean that lessons focus on learning in a pleasant atmosphere with pupils feeling comfortable about contributing appropriate suggestions in question and answer sessions. Their attitude to the subject and behaviour in lessons is generally good. A small number of Year 10 boys appeared passive and disinterested in the theoretical aspects of the lessons, however. Classroom performances are recorded to ensure there is evidence of progress in performing and composing. Homework is set to enhance the work undertaken in class.

### **Leadership and management**

126. The current leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and monitored by the senior management team. The previous head of department left a few weeks before the inspection and a newly-qualified temporary teacher is co-ordinating the department until the recently-appointed head of department takes up the post. She is well supported by an experienced musician who takes some of the lower school classes and also teaches guitar. Assessment procedures are currently unsatisfactory and do not directly relate to the National Curriculum levels. The schemes of work presented at the time of the inspection were based largely on a commercial scheme and did not address the most recent National Curriculum programmes of study or attainments.
127. The department has made very good progress in most areas since the last inspection. The information and communication technology requirement is now met, with pupils having access to dedicated music sequencing software on a departmental computer. There is also a selection of digital recording equipment including CD and minidisk and a large range of midi-compatible electronic keyboards. Accommodation has significantly improved, with a purpose-built music room with practice rooms and storage area and a spacious designated instrumental teaching room. There is now a good range of percussion instruments, including a complete samba band. The library has a small selection of up-to-date music books, which could enhance pupils' individual learning. However, it is under-used by pupils, including those studying GCSE.
128. Music contributes well to the life of all pupils. There is a limited range of musical extra-curricular activities. Instrumental lessons are flourishing with approximately 130 pupils taking part in high quality tuition from the local education authority's music service, with which the school has good links. The music department works hard to develop the social, moral and cultural aspects of the pupils' education. The school samba band is flourishing and valued highly by the pupils. There are regular performances throughout the year within the school, the local community and partner primary schools.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The overall provision for physical education is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good, resulting in a positive response from almost all pupils.
- GCSE results have improved consistently since the last inspection and are now well above the national average.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular provision.

### Areas for development

- The department has insufficient information about pupils on entry.
- The monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently systematic to allow the sharing of good practice.
- There is no permanent base for teaching the theoretical elements of the GCSE syllabus.

### Standards and achievement

129. In the 2001 GCSE examination the proportion of pupils gaining the higher A\*-C grades was well above the national average, albeit from a relatively small entry. All pupils entered gained A\*-G grades. The results obtained in physical education have improved steadily for each of the last three years. In 2001, they were the highest achieved by the department so far. The small number of girls who sat the examination did particularly well. The number of pupils following the GCSE course is increasing year by year.
130. Teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9, in 2001, show standards to be just above the national average. Standards of practical performance seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 were average overall. The majority of pupils demonstrate a satisfactory level of competence in different athletic activities. Standards of attainment among non-examination pupils in Years 10 and 11 are also average, with individual examples of above-average attainment in tennis. The majority of pupils who are currently studying physical education at GCSE level in both Years 10 and 11 achieve average standards in their theory work. Several pupils have produced coursework of a good standard. Most pupils achieve above-average standards in rounders. Several individual pupils also attain above-average standards in rugby and football.
131. In relation to their prior attainment, most pupils are achieving well. On entry to the school, little information is available about the pupils' existing levels of ability. They come to the school from a large number of different primary schools with obvious variations in their previous experiences of physical education. The majority make good progress both in individual lessons and over time. Pupils with special educational needs also progress well. For example, several older pupils are following the GCSE course. Younger pupils in the 'Going for Gold' group make particularly good progress in developing their co-ordination, confidence and social skills. Achievement is at least satisfactory for the majority of non-examination pupils in Years 10 and 11. The majority of GCSE pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress and achieve well.

### Quality of education

132. The quality of teaching is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to very good. The objectives of the lesson are explained very clearly to pupils and this contributes well to

their learning. Pupils are managed well in all lessons and activities are appropriate for the pupils' existing level of ability. During the inspection, incessant rain on one day meant that planned outdoor lessons had to be transferred to the gymnasium and the hall. Teachers adapted well to this enforced change. The majority of pupils respond positively to the teaching they receive and learning is good as a result. Levels of participation vary throughout the school, but are generally good. During the inspection, however, there was a significant minority of non-participants in two groups in Year 8. In the GCSE class in Year 10, a small number of boys lack the self-discipline and motivation necessary for a course of this nature. This has a detrimental effect on their learning, particularly in theory lessons. Their approach contrasts sharply with that of pupils in Year 11 who organised their own activities in a recreational session, showing impressive levels of maturity and co-operation. The standard of kit is good in all lessons and for all extra-curricular activities. Teachers in the department, supported by several other colleagues, contribute to a good range of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime and after school. These activities provide pupils with additional opportunities for improving their level of skill. They are generally well supported by the pupils. Fifty pupils attended an after-school athletic session during the inspection. Recent team successes include the Year 9 girls' hockey team, the Year 11 girls' rounders team and the Year 8 boys' table tennis team, all of whom were winners in Andover and District Tournaments. Although there is no formal recognition of particularly able and talented pupils, the teachers generally know the pupils well. Links with outside organisations, particularly rugby, hockey and cricket clubs, provide pupils with additional opportunities to participate and improve their level of skill.

### **Leadership and management**

133. The head of department has been on long-term sick leave for some time. In his absence the second-in-charge, supported very effectively by her colleagues, is showing good leadership and management in successfully maintaining the existing level of provision. The teachers are working well as a team offering mutual support. A number of improvements have taken place since the last inspection. The balance of activities in Years 7-9 is more appropriate and there are no longer any very short units of work. All teachers delivering the curriculum are now subject specialists. GCSE results have improved significantly.
134. Although colleagues have supported the temporary member of staff very well, there are insufficient opportunities over time for the effective monitoring of teaching that would result in the recognition and sharing of good practice. The department does not currently have a permanent base for teaching the theoretical elements of the examination syllabus, making it more difficult to organise this aspect of the work in the way that teachers would like. One of the rooms currently used can only just accommodate the 33 pupils in the class. The departmental handbook does not make sufficient reference to the part the subject can play in helping to develop the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills or to the use of information and communication technology, particularly at GCSE level. As a result, opportunities to develop these key skills are not explicit. Other aspects of the handbook require revision if it is to become a useful working document.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Overall, the quality of provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

#### **Strengths**

- The teacher in charge of religious education has a good knowledge of the subject.

- Relationships between the pupils and teachers are good.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 does not meet the requirements of the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus.
- Assessment and marking of pupils' work is not used effectively to raise attainment.

#### **Standards and achievement**

135. There are no results to report for GCSE from 2001. The school has recently experienced difficulty in staffing the teaching of religious education. The teacher currently in charge of religious education has begun to build interest in the subject in Years 7 to 9, based on a firm commitment to the value and enjoyment of exploring religious thinking and ideas. As noted in the last inspection, the time allotted for religious education in Years 10 and 11, through the personal and social education programme, is significantly less than that required to cover the requirements of the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus. Overall provision of religious education continues, therefore, to be unsatisfactory.
136. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. For example, in a lesson seen on Christian love, groups of pupils built on a previous lesson, and a set homework, to prepare overhead transparencies for class discussion. They developed ideas of unfairness and injustice, with appropriate examples which some had researched at home. They reflected on the challenges facing rich and poor throughout the world. Higher-attaining pupils were drawn to recognise the complexity of the issues they were facing. For example, in another lesson, pupils showed a good understanding of the right of practising Muslims to observe their daily religious responsibilities with regard to prayer. Higher-attaining pupils recognised that, in a multi-faith society, the rights of different groups could sometimes be in competition. Unfortunately, however, many pupils in this group had been withdrawn over recent weeks from their only timetabled lesson of religious education, to take additional mathematics. These pupils, therefore, had no homework or recent prior lessons from which to draw upon to inform their work.
137. By the end of Year 9, pupils who have attended all their timetabled lessons make satisfactory progress given their low starting points in Year 7. They demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of the key traditions and beliefs of Christianity.

#### **Quality of education**

138. During the inspection, teaching seen was at least satisfactory and often good. Teaching was good in a class of Year 7 pupils when the teacher's confidence in her subject and clear objectives allowed the pupils to demonstrate their understanding of what is meant by 'sacred', and that what is sacred to some people may not be sacred to others. Where teaching was only satisfactory, the size of groups organised for joint discussion were too large, and some pupils were reduced to the status of spectators.
139. The department makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of pupils in Years 7 to 9. For example, as seen in the work sample from Year 7, pupils are brought to reflect upon their own existence, their responsibility to the planet, and significant features of religious symbols, places and artefacts. In Year 9, pupils combine their thoughts on different aspects of Christian love with reflections on unfairness and inequality in the contemporary world, including our national community.

There were no significant differences noted in the attainment of boys and girls. Teachers do not make use of the attainment targets and levels of the Hampshire agreed syllabus, for example by referring to these in their formative comments on pupils' work. Pupils, therefore, do not have a clear understanding of their own achievement and how to make progress.

140. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who are identified as gifted, make satisfactory progress. However, although teachers identify them, there are not always planned activities to meet their needs beyond the work of the whole class. This was a point raised during the last inspection. Some use is made of information and communication technology by the teacher in charge of religious education, for example during the pupils' work on Islam. During the inspection there was little evidence of the use of the library in the work of the pupils. There have been no visits to religious sites over the last year.

### **Leadership and management**

141. The teacher in charge of religious education understands well the demands of the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus. He has encouraged some pupils to choose to go on to further study, and it is understood that there will be a small GCSE class next year. He recognises the value of enriching the religious education curriculum through visits to places of worship and other religious significance, and has visited Winchester Cathedral with a view to a visit next year.
142. Areas for improvement continue to include provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11, as required by the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus, and arrangements in lessons that respond to the needs of lower-attaining pupils. These issues were noted in the last inspection.