

INSPECTION REPORT

THE LORD SILKIN SCHOOL

Telford

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123582

Headteacher: Ms. Jane W. Woodall

Reporting inspector: Dr. R. G. Wallace
1050

Dates of inspection: 26 - 29 November 2001

Inspection number: 190493

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: District Centre
Stirchley

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Telephone number: 01952 595511

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Ian Morris

Date of previous inspection: 25 November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1050	Ronald Wallace	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievement. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9883	Brian Silvester	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? Community links
27984	John Whitehall	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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21981	Anthony McDermott	Team inspector	Science	
31640	Jennifer Payne	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
4757	David Morris	Team inspector	Art	
25744	Trevor Osgerby	Team inspector	History	
29972	John Webster	Team inspector	Geography	Citizenship
31845	Michael Clarke	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
22501	Sue Jones	Team inspector	Music	
19295	Peter Wall	Team inspector	Physical education	
20716	Reg Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education	Boys' achievements

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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10340	John Lockett	Team inspector	Design and technology	
3555	Carol Emery	Team inspector	Support for DT	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school caters for boys and girls aged 11-16. With 799 pupils, it is smaller than most secondary schools, reflecting in part the lack of a sixth form. The number of pupils from ethnic minorities is low and only one of these is at an early stage of learning English. The school has a unit for pupils with statements of special educational needs, particularly those with physical disabilities, and, as a consequence, has more pupils with such needs than do most schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals has been almost double the national average for several years and has been rising whilst the national proportion has been falling. The school is in an Education Action Zone. About a tenth of the pupils have joined the school in the last year other than through the normal admission procedures at the age of 11. Whilst the pupils' attainment on admission to the school covers the full range, a higher proportion of pupils with below-average attainment is admitted than is found in most schools. Selection by attainment for secondary schools takes place in the area. The inspection included a focused evaluation of the school's strategies to support the achievement of boys.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The standard of the pupils' work is rising as a result of strong leadership from the headteacher, supported by governors and staff, much good teaching and the effective learning that is taking place in most lessons. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons. Behaviour in some lessons and the behaviour of some pupils around the school are unsatisfactory. Despite the school's efforts, attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. The school is well managed and gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Test (SAT) results have risen in the last two years at a faster rate than nationally.
- GCSE results have been significantly higher in the last two years than previously.
- Standards in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) are rising rapidly and already match the national average.
- Teaching is good overall with a high proportion of very good teaching.
- The school is strongly led with regular checks on progress made by senior staff, heads of department and governors.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Procedures for child protection are very good and those for ensuring the pupils' welfare are good.

What could be improved

- The behaviour in a minority of lessons and for some pupils around the school is unsatisfactory.
- Despite considerable efforts by the school, absence rates are high and many pupils arrive late for school.
- Despite the big improvement in ICT, the school is not complying with National Curriculum requirements for the use of ICT in some subjects, notably science and music.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. Attainment both in Key Stage 3 SATs and at GCSE is now higher. The leadership of the school is stronger and is focused on raising standards. The governors now play an appropriate role in supporting and challenging the school. The school has responded well to the issues raised by the last inspection, although its success in two regards has been limited: attendance, whilst higher, is still unsatisfactory and there is still unsatisfactory behaviour in some lessons and around the school. The school has established higher expectations of the standards that pupils can achieve, particularly in English. Departments are now working closely together. Class teachers use the expertise gained from special educational needs staff more effectively. The school makes every effort to involve parents in the life of the school, although many parents do not respond. The school has the strength to make further improvements.

STANDARDS

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

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

In the 2001 Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Tests, taken at the end of Year 9, the attainment of the pupils was below average in science and well below in English and mathematics. In comparison with similar schools (those with a similar number of pupils entitled to free school meals) the schools results were average, except in mathematics where they were below average. As the table above shows, the 2001 GCSE results were well below average when compared with all schools and average when compared with similar schools.

The school's results, both in Key Stage 3 SATs and at GCSE, have been improving at a faster rate than schools nationally. The proportion of pupils reaching grades A*-C in five or more subjects, whilst still well below the national average, was at its highest for several years in 2000, with a small dip in 2001. It was double what it was in 1999. The school achieved only one of its three GCSE targets in 2001.

The school's provision for language development is good and pupils are making good progress in raising their skills. The school recognizes in its planning the need to update its policy to promote number skills, which are not improving at the same rate. Provision for the development of ICT skills is good, with the school's pupils matching the standards found nationally. The standards of art are high. Those of most other subjects are in line with the average results as shown by test and examination results at both key stages. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, and these pupils are making good progress. There are some differences in the attainment of boys and girls, and these match quite closely the national differences although the pattern is not consistent. The girls achieve much better than the boys in English, whilst the boys achieve a little better than the girls in mathematics and science. Higher-attaining pupils do well if they are well-motivated, and their parents are very pleased with their success at the school, but there are some pupils not achieving as well as they should because their attitudes are unhelpful to learning.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils have satisfactory attitudes to learning, but a significant minority do not, making unsatisfactory progress in their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The majority of pupils behave well in lessons but some have not learned classroom discipline. The behaviour of a significant number of pupils around the school is poor, making the overall behaviour unsatisfactory.
Personal development and relationships	Most pupils develop a satisfactory sense of responsibility, and relationships are satisfactory. Many teachers establish good classroom relationships with their pupils and learning is good overall as a result.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory and has not improved greatly since the last inspection despite much effort and considerable additional expenditure.

The continuing unsatisfactory behaviour and attendance of some pupils are weaknesses to which the school has given much attention but which have not yet been overcome.

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 about a quarter of lessons taught very well or excellently and only a very small amount that is unsatisfactory. The difference in the quality of teaching between both subjects and key stages is insignificant. Good teaching was seen in all subjects, including the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching is mostly related to insufficient learning achieved, sometimes the results of the pupils' poor behaviour.

Most lessons are well planned. Many begin with a statement of aims with a check at the end about the achievement of those aims. Many teachers combine a pleasant manner and high expectations of their pupils' behaviour and industry, and establish good relationships as a result. There is a good policy for promoting higher standards of literacy, and most teachers have high expectations of their pupils' use of language, although standards remain below average. There is not yet an effective policy to promote number skills throughout the school. The development of ICT skills is good and enables the pupils to achieve well. Achievement in GNVQ classes is good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of good provision and effective teaching. Some able pupils could achieve more and will do so if they respond to the many activities arranged by the school to raise their expectations and improve their motivation.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and meets the needs of the pupils. GNVQ courses are being strongly established.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good both in the special unit and in the lessons in which pupils with special educational needs are mostly taught.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	This is satisfactory overall: good for the pupils' moral and social development, satisfactory for their cultural development, and unsatisfactory for their spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school looks after its pupils well, with good provision for their welfare.

The school is very open in its attitudes and welcomes parental involvement. It works hard to achieve this with some success, although the response of many parents is unsatisfactory. The school does not comply with the National Curriculum requirements for the use of ICT in science and at Key Stage 3 in music. There is insufficient use of ICT in some other subjects, including English.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Strong leadership by the headteacher, well supported by senior and other staff, is carrying the school forward. There is a clear focus on raising the pupils' self-esteem, achievement and standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors include some very experienced people who have a range of effective methods to discharge their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Critical self-analysis is an important feature of the school with an honest approach, good use of statistics and good planning.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses all of its resources appropriately.

The main strength of the school's leadership is the concentration on improvement in all facets of its work. The level of staffing is high and the staff are appropriately deployed. The accommodation is satisfactory overall and is well maintained. Learning resources are sufficient in most subjects. The library is a very good facility. The school applies informally the principles of best value in its purchasing and staff have recently been trained.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Parents say that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children like school and make good progress; • teaching is good; • the school is approachable; • it is well managed. 	<p>The concerns of a minority are that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is bad behaviour; • reporting to them about their child's progress is unsatisfactory; • the school does not work closely enough with parents; • more than a quarter were concerned at the amount of homework.

Inspectors confirm all the strengths noted by parents. They also agree with parents that there is unsatisfactory behaviour. They do not agree with parents about the school's reporting on pupils' standards, which is good. The inspectors found that the school makes strenuous efforts to involve parents, with some success but many parents do not respond. At the meeting, parents were divided about whether enough or too much homework was set. During the inspection week a satisfactory amount of homework was set.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In the Key Stage 3 Standards Assessment Tests (SATs) which assess attainment at the age of 14, the results remained largely unchanged for several years until 2000, with all three subjects well below the national average. In 2000, although they were still below average, there was a big improvement in the English results. The proportion reaching the expected Level 5 doubled and there was a very big increase in the number achieving Level 6. In 2001 there was some improvement in all three subjects but the overall results were still well below average. When compared with similar schools (those with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free meals) the results for the whole school and those in English and science were average, whilst those for mathematics were below average. The upward trend in the school's performance in Key Stage 3 SATs has been at a faster rate than in the country as a whole.
2. In 2000 the school had its best GCSE results for some years, followed by a small drop in 2001 in the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in five or more subjects. Whilst still below the national average for all schools in 2000 and well below in 2001, the results in both years were average when compared with similar schools. The improvement in the school's results has been taking place at a faster rate than in the country as a whole. The school exceeded both its 2001 GCSE target and the national average for pupils achieving a grade A*-G in at least one subject, but did not achieve its other two GCSE targets.
3. There are significant differences between subjects in their effectiveness at enabling pupils to do well at GCSE. In 2000 the teaching in art, geography, home economics, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education enabled pupils to achieve well at GCSE, whereas pupils achieved less well in English, mathematics and design and technology than they did in the average of all their other subjects. A similar analysis of subject results is not yet available for 2001.
4. There have been significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls, but there is not a consistent pattern. In the 2000 SATs the differences mirrored those found nationally. The girls achieved much better than boys in English, whilst boys achieved a little better than the girls in mathematics and science. In both 2000 and 2001 the girls at the school did a little better than the boys in the GCSE examinations, but the girls were significantly further behind girls nationally than were the school's boys behind boys nationally. In German in 2000 there was a significant gender difference with girls achieving much better results on average than in their other subjects and boys much worse results. Gender was seen to play a part in the achievement of the pupils as observed during the inspection, but again the pattern is not consistent. The attitude of the pupils to study, irrespective of gender, is a major factor in determining their progress. It is more often the case that it is the attitude of some boys that prevents their progress, but there are occasions when it is girls who hold back themselves and other pupils by their poor motivation. There are also occasions when boys who are contributing well orally to the lesson are so dominant that more able girls gain little from oral work, whilst shining in written work. The national evidence that boys and girls reach higher standards in physical education if taught separately at secondary school was confirmed by the observation of Year 9 in mixed groups.

5. The standards of current work in the school are below average at both key stages. Generally the variations in standards between subjects match those in recent examination results. In two subjects, art and ICT, standards are higher than in the others and are in line with national expectations. In some other subjects attainment is higher during lessons than in recent examinations but it is evident that the pupils cannot sustain the same standard of work over time and into examinations. The failure to do homework seriously and at the required depth, to remember essential facts and ideas, to write English at the right standard and to produce coursework for GCSE of the required quality are factors in this difference between some work seen and what the test and examination results show. Generally, however, the standard seen in lessons was in line with examination results. Pupils taking GNVQ in Years 10 and 11 respond well to the approaches of these courses. No pupils have yet completed the two-year courses, but their work at this stage shows considerable promise.
6. The provision for the development of language skills is good and much better than at the time of the last inspection. Following the extensive work of a group made up of members of the school and the local authority, there is now a whole-school policy for literacy, with all subject handbooks including a section on it. All staff have received training for the development of literacy in their subject. This has made teachers more confident in their classroom practice. Departments provide for the development of language skills in their medium-term plans with some subjects also identifying specific targets for literacy in their short-term plans.
7. All subjects have key words for the subject on display or on worksheets given to pupils. This consolidates the pupils' knowledge of the appropriate vocabulary for the subject and enables them to take part in discussion in classrooms. The key words also enable the pupils to develop their reading skills and most can read subject textbooks in class. As part of training for literacy, subject departments have been provided with exemplars of writing frames. These give structure to the pupils' written work and encourage them to write at greater length and in more detail. This particularly applies to those subjects that rely more on the pupils' writing skills, such as history and geography, with some sound extended written work observed in these subjects.
8. Despite this very good provision and practice, standards in oral skills, reading and writing, remain below average in both English and all other areas of the curriculum. Some pupils have good oral, social language skills by the age of 16, but do not have the capacity to organise their thoughts and express opinions fluently. Some articulate pupils, mostly boys, prefer to speak rather than listen and they do not yet know how to participate in a conversation. This is an aspect of classroom discipline that requires attention. Whilst most pupils have sufficiently high reading skills to participate fully in lessons, few develop the higher reading skills because extended reading is something done by most of them only when required by school work. By Key Stage 4, the higher-attaining pupils are writing well, but the majority are not reaching the required standard and for some it is their attitude to study that is preventing them from improving.
9. The standards of number skills are also below the expected level. The need for the improvement of number skills throughout the school, and particularly their use in lessons other than mathematics, is well understood by the school, which intends to adopt the principles of the National Numeracy Strategy. Excellent facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) and good teaching are ensuring that standards are rising rapidly. Most pupils are making good progress and the standard of their work matches or exceeds the national average. There is a need for more use

of ICT in some subjects, and some skills required by the National Curriculum are not yet covered satisfactorily, but overall ICT is one of the school's strengths.

10. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress. The expertise of the specialist staff now permeates teaching and learning throughout the school. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Most higher-attaining pupils do well if they have good attitudes and high motivation. There is a significant number of borderline pupils who could achieve more, and the school already has many approaches to encourage them to do so.
11. Overall, the standards of the pupils' work, both in examinations and as observed during the inspection, are higher than at the time of the previous inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The pupils' attitude to their work in lessons is satisfactory overall. Most pupils remain on task in lessons, concentrate well and are committed learners. They are keen to answer and raise questions and make relevant contributions to the lesson, acting within the discipline of listening to each other. Most pupils listen to their teacher and get on well with the work given. Pupils with special educational needs have a good attitude to their work. In a minority of classes, however, a significant number of pupils have an unsatisfactory attitude. They do not want to learn, are easily distracted, take a long time to settle and constantly chatter. Their behaviour disrupts their own learning and that of other pupils. There is occasionally a link between unsatisfactory attitudes by pupils and the standard of teaching observed.
13. The boys from Years 8 and 9 who were interviewed had good attitudes to learning overall, but there were some differences in their attitudes to particular subjects. There was a definite preference for physical education and art rather than music, religious education and textiles. It was sometimes their respect for the teacher, irrespective of gender, that was the most important factor in their subject preferences. They responded to incentives, for example enjoying the oral work in German with the prospect of a trip to Austria. They liked clear target-setting, openly stated lesson objectives and termly grade sheets. They valued help in writing up their work, as in science. Generally they found little bias or inequality in lessons. A general complaint, agreed by inspectors, is that there are insufficient opportunities to use ICT in some subjects.
14. Boys from Year 10 who were interviewed held similar views, although with this group music was popular. These boys considered that English topics were more geared towards the interests of girls, which may contribute to the lower attainment by boys in this subject. They liked history because of the interesting homework set and also physical education and ICT.
15. The behaviour of the pupils around the school is unsatisfactory overall. It is also unsatisfactory in a minority of lessons. In their response to the questionnaire before the inspection, 17 per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire were not happy with the standard of behaviour achieved and inspectors confirm their view. Most pupils behave well but in a significant minority of lessons a small number of pupils display unsatisfactory behaviour. They do not settle to their work, they call out, are disruptive of those who want to learn and demand too much time of the teacher. Unsatisfactory behaviour was also observed at break and lunchtime. Some pupils push and shove in queues, throw bits of their food around, smoke in the playground and call each other unpleasant names. In the past school year there were 63 fixed-term and six permanent exclusions. This is about half the number at the time of the

previous inspection. Exclusions are appropriately used to emphasize the bounds of unacceptable behaviour, alongside the School Development Centre for encouraging pupils to modify their behaviour whilst remaining at school.

16. Relationships, between pupils and between pupils and adults, are satisfactory overall. Teachers have a very caring approach to the pupils and teach them to treat others with respect. Most pupils respond well to this but a significant minority do not. They do not respect their teachers and have a confrontational approach to some of their fellow pupils. In some cases problems and conflicts in the outside community are brought into school. Because of the unsatisfactory behaviour of some of the pupils, some teachers are reluctant to allow pupils to work in pairs and in groups. The relations between the physically disabled pupils and the pupils who support and assist them around the school are good. Relationships between staff and pupils with special educational needs are very good. At the beginning of school, lunch and break times, the Learning Support Base is a happy environment where pupils with special educational needs know that they are valued and respected. In lessons the same pupils have fully accepted their role as learners and show good attitudes to their work.
17. The level of attendance in 1999-2000 was 88.7 per cent, which was well below the national average and poor. The level of unauthorised absence in 1999-2000 was worse than the national average. The level of attendance had improved marginally since the previous inspection by 1999-2000 but the level of unauthorised absence had worsened. The level of unauthorised absence in Year 9 was poor, where 30 per cent of the pupils had an unauthorised absence in the summer term of 1999-2000. The school reports better attendance so far this term with a rate of 90 per cent, although 1.9 per cent of absence is still unauthorised. If this is sustained for a whole year, it will be a significant improvement. There is little difference between the attendance of boys and girls. The main reasons given for absence are illness, holidays in term time, some condoned absences by parents, social problems at home and the lack of the necessary bus fare. Many pupils leave during the school year and this increases the absence rate because it sometimes takes a while before a former pupil can be taken off the register and, in the meantime, that pupil is classified as absent. Most pupils are punctual but a substantial minority, 5 per cent, arrive late. Late arrivals are recorded in the late book in the school office. Form tutors and other staff do not always indicate to pupils who arrive late that their unpunctuality is unacceptable and that the failure to improve has consequences. The school works very hard to improve attendance and punctuality but has not yet been successful. It has been given substantial resources, including a full-time officer and additional support permanently on the school site, to tackle this problem. As yet the outcomes are not adequate for the investment. The poor attendance and punctuality of pupils has an adverse impact on their attainment and learning.
18. The personal development of the pupils is satisfactory and their interest and involvement in activities are good. Pupils respond well to the opportunities that they are given to take responsibility. They serve as prefects and peer supporters, and represent their peers on the Student Panel. Year 9 pupils act as 'host for the day'. Pupils serve the food and perform at the senior citizens' Christmas lunch. Through the charity committees, pupils raise a large sum of money to donate to local and national charities. Ten Year 11 pupils received good citizen awards from the local police for their work with primary schools. There are, however, insufficient opportunities for pupils to work on their own and to enhance their independent learning.
19. In the previous inspection report it was stated that attendance was poor and some behaviour was unsatisfactory. This is still the case.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching is good overall. In almost a quarter of lessons the teaching is very good or excellent and in only two per cent is it unsatisfactory. There is only a small difference in the quality of teaching between the two key stages. There is more of the very good teaching in art, geography, history, ICT, mathematics and science, but some good or very good teaching in all subjects.
21. The teachers have good subject knowledge and promote the basic language skills well. The consolidation of previous learning, by recapping at the start of each lesson before the introduction of new learning, is a strong feature of the teaching. The aims of the lessons are frequently made clear at the outset with a check for achievement at the end. These were features of many lessons, notably an art class with Year 11 where the emphasis was on preparation for the forthcoming mock examinations in which the pupils would have to develop an idea from inception to completion. Very thorough planning is also a strong feature of many lessons, such as a history lesson with Year 9 on sources of information about Richard Arkwright and a religious education lesson with Year 9 on turning truth into action.
22. Many teachers know how to combine a pleasant manner with firmness in their expectations of behaviour and learning, creating a good working atmosphere. Examples of this were seen in a Year 10 science class investigating fuel and a Year 7 German lesson about the pupils' hobbies. It was also a feature of several well-taught physical education lessons, such as a Year 11 lesson on teamwork in volleyball. Most teachers demand the accurate use of English, especially the correct spelling of subject-specific words. This was a feature of a Year 10 child development lesson, where pupils were required to use the Internet for research using correct spellings, and a Year 9 English lesson where the brisk start to the lesson was a spelling test of words from *Macbeth*. Modern language teachers are establishing the correct use of grammar and sentence structures, as in a Year 8 French lesson on time, where the pupils' understanding of the infinitive was reinforced.
23. The teaching of individuals within the class as a whole is a good feature of much teaching, so that individual weaknesses are tackled. This was evident in a Year 11 food studies lesson where pupils were completing coursework. It is a strong feature of all GNVQ lessons and is often coupled with the use of problems encountered or discoveries made by pupils as teaching points. In a very well taught Year 10 GNVQ ICT lesson these features were evident. Some teachers use the pupils' own work as a teaching method, most notably in a Year 11 geography lesson where a case study on coastal erosion was conducted as a public meeting in which pupils argued the cases for and against the building of coastal defences.
24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, and that of lower-attaining sets is also often good. A Year 8 geography lesson on the distribution of population was very well taught to a lower-attaining set with a high proportion of pupils who had statements of special educational needs. In a similar class in Year 9, the music teacher had good methods to keep the pupils engaged on their learning about rhythm as part of their composition of a minuet. Whilst there was a variation in their quality, some of the lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) were well taught, both by school staff and visitors.
25. Several subjects have specific approaches to raise the attainment of boys, beyond those such as target setting and the raising of language skills, which are used with both genders. In science, seating plans require boys and girls to sit together. There is a particular focus on coursework to prevent boys slacking on written assignments and

also encouragement to use writing frames. In design and technology (resistant materials) competition, on which boys seem to thrive, is used frequently. In history particular attention is given to equality in demanding responses from pupils in class and consideration is being given to the teaching techniques that appeal to boys. The geography department chose the GCSE course that showed the narrowest gap between gender in results, and it sets short, structured tasks with immediate feedback. In religious education, speed-writing exercises are set. The teachers of drama and German ensure that themes, such as sport and adventure, feature strongly. In art the practical approach of many lessons enables boys to achieve well. In physical education, as in other subjects, the competitive element is emphasized, and male mentors serve as role models. The subject gives some boys their greatest success at GCSE. Many of these approaches are new and the long-term benefits are not yet clear but the school is conscious of the need to raise boys' achievements.

26. When inspectors observed lessons with a particular focus on boys' achievement (although the teachers did not know that this was the case) they found some of these methods in practice. The observation of a top-set mathematics lesson in Year 11 illustrated the point that abler, well-motivated boys participate, contribute and achieve as well as girls. Boys and girls sat separately by their own choice, offered the same number of responses, had their offers accepted equally by the teacher, worked at similar levels and occasionally lost concentration to the same degree. It was a very well taught lesson with well-motivated boys and girls. For both genders in some classes there is insufficient regard to the interests of the highest-attaining pupils in the mixed-ability groups at Key Stage 4. Some teachers have insufficient regard to the interests of the quieter gender, usually the girls, although in a couple of lessons it was the girls who dominated the lesson and limited the boys' learning.
27. Some parents have expressed concern about the amount of homework set, some judging it to be inadequate and others excessive. The wide variation in pupils' experience, as noted by concerned parents, indicates inconsistency of practice in ensuring that homework is completed to the required standard. The inspection found no inconsistency in the formal arrangements for the setting of homework.
28. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was mostly a failure to ensure sufficient progress in the pupils' learning, usually because of weaknesses in controlling the class, even, in one case, where a teacher and learning support assistant had responsibility for only twelve pupils

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

29. The curriculum fulfils statutory requirements except for ICT in science and in music at Key Stage 3. The quality and range of opportunities provided are satisfactory with good provision for careers, pupils with special educational needs and vocational education. The school provides a curriculum that is balanced and which offers a wide range of learning opportunities meeting the needs of the pupils. The school has responded well to recent national curricular initiatives, for example Curriculum 2000, and has widened options with the introduction of GNVQ courses. The school literacy strategy is supported well by many subjects. The numeracy policy is not up to date and does not take cognizance of the National Numeracy Strategy. Whilst ICT is increasingly used in subjects as a means of learning and assessment, there is insufficient equipment and inadequate reference to its use in some subject schemes of work to ensure compliance with the requirements of the National Curriculum.

30. The provision for Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) is satisfactory. The time allocation for each subject is broadly in line with the national guidelines. Pupils are taught mainly in sets based on prior attainment. French and German are taught in each year; the setting arrangements of four sets of one language to two sets for the other causes an imbalance but does allow for some pupils to take a second language. History and geography have an adequate time allocation but there is a lack of continuity as these subjects are blocked in half term units. Some groups in physical education are taught in mixed gender groups until the end of Year 9, limiting the range of activities and affecting standards. The provision for religious education and personal, social and health education is satisfactory.
31. The provision in Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11) is satisfactory. There is a good range of curricular options. Although the first candidates are still to complete their courses, the introduction of GNVQ has been a helpful initiative for many pupils.
32. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support. All curricular provision is available to them. Pupils with the poorest spelling use spelling programmes on computers in the weekly after-school spelling club. Learning support is provided by additional teachers in some lessons and by learning support assistants. Their work is effectively organised. The use of teachers in this way has resulted in some large teaching groups. Pupils with additional needs are also well supported, enabling them to take a full part in the opportunities presented. The very few pupils with English as an additional language have equal access to the curriculum. The groups taking textiles and resistant materials are formed very much along gender lines.
33. The school's emphasis on equality extends to equality in the curriculum for boys and girls. A major purpose in developing GNVQ courses in ICT, leisure and tourism and manufacturing was to meet the boys' expressed preference for more opportunities for work-related learning and hands-on experience. The high investment in ICT and extra-curricular activities, such as the sports leadership training and go-kart construction, are also helpful in engaging boys more in their learning. Education Action Zone funding is used to target fifty pupils at Key Stage 4 who are not achieving as well as they should to encourage them to continue their education after school. The school's careers officer works with a small group of Key Stage 4 pupils, mostly boys, who need additional guidance.
34. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. There is a detailed policy and a comprehensive handbook. A one-hour PSHE lesson is delivered weekly by the form tutors. A wide range of visiting speakers enhance the PSHE curriculum. The PSHE co-ordinator observes lessons and speaks to heads of years but the monitoring is not well developed. During the inspection week, the quality of the PSHE lessons was variable.
35. There are good links with primary schools and further education colleges, assisting in the smooth transfer from primary to secondary school and later to further education. The school has good links with the community involving local manufacturing and service industries in its effective careers guidance. There are excellent work experience opportunities for the pupils and mentoring programmes including the National Mentoring Pilot Project funded by the Education Action Zone. Careers guidance is closely focused on the needs of individual pupils. There is a well-constructed course throughout the school, ensuring as much as possible that the pupils make realistic choices at the end of Year 9 for Key Stage 4 and in Year 11 for further education and employment. The school has been recognized as an Investor in Careers.

36. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities aimed at consolidating the understanding achieved in the formal curriculum and widening the pupils' experience. The pupils' interest and ability in music are well catered for by a wide range of activities including steel band, wind band and groups playing keyboards and recorders. There is an annual play. There are after-school clubs aimed at curriculum support and enrichment in history, geography, English and special needs, workshops in drama, as well as physical education and games activities. Visiting speakers and artists' exhibitions also enrich the curriculum.
37. The pupils' social and health education is well catered for, where sex education and the problems of drug and substance abuse are dealt with fully in PSHE lessons taught by form tutors assisted by speakers from external agencies. Understanding of these topics is reinforced where appropriate in the wider school curriculum.
38. The school's provision for its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Although art and religious education play a part in developing the pupils spiritually, other features that might contribute, such as the thought for the day and assemblies, do not do so, and this is an unsatisfactory aspect of the provision. Provision for the pupils' moral and social development is good, with many activities to promote an understanding of right and wrong and to encourage good relations with other people. There are strong contributions to the pupils' cultural development, especially from the music department with groups such as the steel band that played at the national Child of Achievement Ceremony and received the award for Service in the Community, and from drama. There are, however, insufficient activities taking place to promote a greater understanding of life in a more multicultural community than Telford. Overall, the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The steps taken to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety are good. The teachers know their pupils well, recognise their needs and give them good support and guidance. The school has a health and safety policy but it is not signed and dated. There is an annual safety audit of the buildings and grounds. A report is made to the Governing Body and the local authority, and action is taken on any concerns wherever possible. Several health and safety concerns were identified during the inspection week. These were pointed out to the school at the time and later confirmed in writing to the headteacher and chair of governors. A private firm has recently carried out a health and safety risk assessment of the school. Termly fire drills are completed and all the moveable equipment is checked annually. Staff attend health and safety training courses. The school has a full-time nurse. A range of other specialists come into the school to support the pupils. There are five qualified first-aiders. The only weaknesses in this provision are in the facilities of the learning support base for pupils with physical disabilities, which limit the work of the physiotherapist.
40. The child protection procedures are very good. The school has an appropriate child protection policy and an assistant headteacher is responsible for its implementation. She has received the necessary training and updates it annually. An annual training session is provided for all staff and there has been some training for the lunchtime supervisors. The school has a very close working relationship with the local Social Services department. Proper records are maintained.
41. The school's procedures for monitoring behaviour are satisfactory overall, although there are weaknesses in their implementation. There is a behaviour policy, which contains a suitable range of rewards and sanctions to encourage good behaviour. The policy on discipline for learning is based upon pupils being able to expect a positive

learning environment and teachers being able to expect good behaviour. The policy is well understood by the pupils and prominently displayed around the school. A significant minority of pupils do not follow the policy, which is not always applied consistently. This contributes to some of the unsatisfactory behaviour in the school.

42. The school has a good anti-bullying policy. Bullying is one of the topics of the PSHE programme. Serious incidents of bullying are infrequent but there are more examples of name-calling and pupils being unpleasant to others. Parents are asked to contact the school if there are any signs of bullying. Proper records are kept of bullying and racist incidents and these are always dealt with speedily and correctly.
43. The school's procedures for monitoring and supporting the pupils' personal development are satisfactory. The personal development of the pupils is monitored by their form teachers and other teachers and staff in the school. Pupils retain the same tutor during their school career and this continuity assists the monitoring of their personal development. Form tutors monitor the pupils' handbooks and files and liaise with other staff. From this information, comments on personal development are written in the annual record of achievement. Also, parents receive a personal progress summary letter. The school's pastoral team meets half-termly. Staff go to great lengths to help the pupils and are very supportive of them.
44. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory but are not applied with sufficient rigour. It is not that new practices are needed, but that the existing practices should make greater demands on some pupils and their parents. Attendance is monitored by an assistant headteacher, two education welfare officers (EWOs) and an attendance clerk. The school makes great efforts to monitor and improve attendance but it has not yet been successful in substantially increasing the attendance rate. The school operates a system of first day telephone calling to all those parents of pupils who are absent without a known reason. Also, at times, a 'blitz' of all unauthorised absences on one day is done with home visits made in all cases. The EWOs and the police do truancy sweeps and checks are made to see if there is any internal truancy during the school day. Non-attendance on a Friday is a problem and the school is attempting to tackle this. Where non-attendance is a concern, letters are sent out, home visits made and cases are taken to court. The importance of attendance and punctuality is emphasised in the school prospectus. There is a wide range of rewards and certificates, for form tutor groups and for individual pupils, for full and improved attendance. The EWO sends out personal congratulation cards where a pupil has made a good improvement in attendance. Registers are marked regularly but, in a few cases, greater care is required to ensure that all pupils are marked present or absent rather than the space in the register left blank. Despite all these measures, only modest improvements have been made. Firmer action, in conjunction with the local authority, and a much sharper focus are required to convince parents of their obligations to get their child to school.
45. In the previous inspection it was stated that good provision was made for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils and this is still the case. The evidence of this inspection is that a sharper focus is required to boost the low attendance, which has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection.
46. The school's policies for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic performance are good. These are co-ordinated by a member of the senior management team. There is an effective and thorough database, which records the progress of individual pupils throughout their school career. Key Stage 2 data is transferred from the feeder schools and then realistic minimum targets for improvement by the end of Key Stage 3, matched to prior attainment, are added and

the results sent to parents in the first term in Year 7. The system permits good 'tracking' of pupils' performance by departments, who add their own assessment data. At the end of Key Stage 3, data from performance in SATS is added.

47. There are regular meetings by departments to review attainment in the teaching groups and assessment information is used effectively to monitor progress. Pupils who are wrongly matched to their current level of work are well supported by alterations to their teaching arrangements. The work of pupils with special educational needs is well monitored by the review system. Departments keep their own detailed assessment records, but not all of them apply the information consistently to guide curricular planning.
48. At Key Stage 4, the departments submit their predictions, based on prior performance, of pupils' expected grades at GCSE, particularly those who should achieve grades A*-C. This enables the school to set effective examination targets and to predict likely performance. The information is set out on a 'grade check' spreadsheet twice a year and enables departments to target borderline candidates. It also supports the school's efforts to raise the achievement of boys, by tracking their performance. In accordance with the aim to raise standards, pupils and parents are informed each term of the 'minimum acceptable grades' for GCSE performance, based on assessment information.
49. Records of achievement, which were criticised in the last report, now supply full information. There is a more accurate picture of the attainment of pupils, including the levels reached at Key Stage 3 and their predicted GCSE performance. Overall, the assessment and monitoring of the academic progress of pupils is a strength of the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The school works hard to involve parents in their child's education and the work of the school but the response from many parents is unsatisfactory.
51. The quality of information provided is good. A termly newsletter, *Silkin Scene*, is sent out as well as regular information letters. Diaries of events are also sent out. Parents of pupils new to the school are invited to an introductory meeting in the summer term before entry. In the autumn term Year 7 parents meet their child's class tutor and discuss the partnership agreement. This comprehensive document informs parents of their responsibilities and how they can assist their child's education. They are also given a good booklet on how they can support their child's learning at home. Parents receive progress summary reports termly, as well as information about the homework timetable.
52. In their response to the questionnaire before the inspection, a substantial minority of parents stated that they were not happy with the amount of homework provided. The school has a clear homework policy and the timetable is written in the pupils' handbook. Provision of homework is monitored by heads of year and form tutors. The arrangements for homework are satisfactory but parental support at home is sometimes unsatisfactory. Also in the questionnaire a significant minority felt that the school did not work closely with parents. The inspection evidence is that the school tries hard to involve parents but the response from some is unsatisfactory.
53. There are regular information evenings, including one to discuss the pupils' annual reports and their record of achievement. These reports tell parents what their child

knows, understands and can do and set targets for improvement. On a monthly basis, parents can come in to see the school in action.

54. The links with parents of pupils who have statements of special educational needs are good. Many attend termly meetings to discuss with staff the progress that their child is making. Most take a full part in the annual review process, contributing to the setting of targets for the year.
55. Some social and fund raising events are held and these are supported by some of the parents. A few parents help in school but not on a regular basis. Parents are invited to special events like the school play, the celebration of Christmas and awards' evening.
56. At the previous inspection a key issue was to involve parents more closely in the life of the school. The school has worked hard to achieve this but the parental response has been unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The school is well led and managed, with a commitment to raising standards in all aspects of its work. A strong emphasis on accountability and monitoring is raising standards. There is a wide range of activities to promote higher attainment by pupils, both boys and girls, with some specific activities for the former. Members of the leadership group (senior staff) meet departmental heads regularly to set goals, review progress, resolve problems and plan for progress. Teaching, the core of any school's work, is frequently monitored and there are good procedures for supporting staff. Heads of department have a specific time allocation for monitoring work in their subject. Taking responsibility at all levels is matched by an emphasis on training. Parents and governors approve the clear leadership given to the school by the professional staff. At the time of the previous inspection it was judged that the Governing Body needed to be more active in its monitoring role. It has responded well. Experienced governors now have a range of effective ways in which they find out about the school's performance.
58. Planning for improvement is carried out on the basis of an honest look at what has been achieved and what still needs to be tackled. Good use is made of the hard evidence provided by statistics when the school is evaluating its achievements. Detailed plans relate well to wisely chosen priorities. The school hopes to achieve the status of a business and enterprise school, to reflect a strong emphasis on vocational courses and ICT, and also to raise the attainment of boys.
59. A marked feature of the school is the positive and cheerful approach adopted by staff with varied responsibilities – managerial, teaching, library, administrative, welfare, caretaking and canteen. The school operates in circumstances that are sometimes very challenging and the maintenance of positive attitudes and the belief in the possibility of progress are two of its greatest assets.
60. A high level of funding, justified by the problems that the school has to overcome, and a very pleasant and well-maintained building contribute to its success. The budget is balanced well each year, with reasonable surpluses taken forward to the following year. The pattern of expenditure indicates abnormally high spending on classroom support by teachers and learning support assistants with abnormally low expenditure on learning resources such as books. Relevant staff and governors have recently received training from the local authority on how to achieve best value when

purchasing services and equipment, although present arrangements suggest no lapses in this regard to date. Overall, the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

61. Specific grants are appropriately used, but the school lacks evidence to assess how effective it is in the considerable expenditure on special educational needs staffing. The inspection does not suggest any significant inefficiency, but such high expenditure needs to be judged by its cost effectiveness – outcomes related to expenditure – in comparison with the progress made by other pupils in the school, pupils in other schools and the national data.
62. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. An instrumental teacher, who is not a qualified secondary school teacher, helps pupils individually when they are using an ICT software package in the composing component of their GCSE coursework. The level of support staff is good. The school's procedures for appraisal and performance management are good. Performance management is in its second year; targets have been set for all teachers and targets are planned for support staff. Line managers review targets. The induction of new staff and newly qualified teachers is good. Mentors are provided, lessons are observed and training needs are met. The staff have been led by one of the school's own teachers in training on gender issues, resulting in departments formulating their own methods to help boys to succeed. The school development plan includes further training on raising the attainment of boys.
63. The adequacy of accommodation is satisfactory overall and most teaching areas are good. The buildings are well maintained. The accommodation restricts the range of activities for physically handicapped pupils and the learning support base has unsatisfactory accommodation for these pupils because the facilities for physiotherapy are inadequate. Whilst the joint use of the sports hall gives pupils access to additional activities not always available to school pupils, it also limits the variety of physical education activities that the National Curriculum expects to be followed. The accommodation in science is unsatisfactory at present, but the school already has the resources to modernise three laboratories, with work starting in the spring.
64. Learning resources are mostly adequate. They are good in modern languages and art. The provision of reference books in the library is good for art and science but there are shortages in other subjects. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in science, music and English is unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

65. The school needs to build on its recent progress. To do this it should:

- (1) tackle with greater rigour the unsatisfactory behaviour in some lessons and around the school by:
 - not accepting low level disruption, inappropriate language and casual rudeness in lessons when it occurs;
 - increasing guidance to inexperienced teachers and those new to the school on how to establish themselves more quickly in an environment that is more challenging than they may previously have encountered;
 - increasing activities that raise the pupils' self-esteem, teach them social skills and clarify what the school expects and what it will not tolerate;
 - increasing supervision by teachers during breaks and around the school when pupils are arriving and leaving. (paragraphs 12, 15, 26, 28, 41)
- (2) improve attendance and reduce lateness by:
 - taking firmer action, in conjunction with the local authority, to convince parents of their obligations;
 - monitoring the actions of the relevant staff, bearing in mind the very generous staffing level provided, to ensure that the focus is very clearly on getting absent pupils into school promptly;
 - ensuring that form tutors and all other staff indicate to pupils arriving late that their unpunctuality is unacceptable and that a failure to improve has consequences. (paragraphs 17, 44)
- (3) ensure compliance with the National Curriculum requirements for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in subjects by:
 - ensuring adequate access to ICT facilities for all subjects and checking that all subjects include in their schemes of work the expected use of ICT;
 - specifically providing the required equipment and software to enable music and science teachers to comply with National Curriculum requirements. (paragraphs 9, 13, 29, 64, 88, 99, 101, 117, 133, 142, 151)
- (4) respond to the health and safety matters that have been brought to its attention.

The school should also consider these less significant matters:

- Accommodation for physically disabled pupils needs to be improved in order to make possible a wide-ranging programme of physiotherapy. (paragraphs 63, 76)
- The school puts an appropriately high proportion of its resources into support for pupils with special educational needs during lessons. A survey, to ensure the cost-effectiveness of this provision and to measure the progress of the supported pupils over time compared with the progress of pupils as a whole, would provide valuable evidence of cost-effectiveness. (paragraph 61)
- The policy for promoting the use of number skills in subjects and raising numeracy standards is not up-to-date and does not take account of the National Numeracy Strategy. (paragraphs 9, 29, 100)

- There are some health and safety faults that have been brought to the attention of the headteacher and governors.

CITIZENSHIP

66. The school's promotion of citizenship is satisfactory and provides an adequate preparation for the forthcoming national requirements. Part of a staff training day devoted to citizenship was a prelude to a departmental audit of current practice in terms of the skills of enquiry, communication, participation and responsible action. This enabled the co-ordinator to identify aspects of citizenship which were not being covered - the work of parliament, government, the judicial system and Britain's relationship with the European Union and the rest of the world. The audit also achieved its secondary aim - to prompt teaching staff in readiness for their enhanced role in this aspect of personal development.
67. Discrete activities are planned - a Year 8 courtroom enactment and a Year 10 industry day, for example - but the expectation is that citizenship will be delivered through the curriculum. The theme is already beginning to impinge on learning. A course of lessons on coastal erosion for Year 11 geographers ended with a "public meeting" at which pupils played the roles of hotelier, expert, local councillors, residents and others and so contributed to a lively debate on whether coastal defences in Norfolk should be strengthened, gaining oracy and literacy skills alongside geographical knowledge as well as an insight into local democracy at work. Modern language teachers increasingly refer to the Euro currency when dealing with costs and prices. The science department now thinks in terms of the need for legislation when it deals with such topics such as endangered species, genetic modification and drug abuse.
68. In such ways, the school is preparing itself for September 2002 when citizenship becomes an obligatory component of its work.

COMMUNITY LINKS

69. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good. Pupils serve the food and perform at the senior citizens' Christmas lunch. Ten Year 11 pupils received good citizen awards from the police for their work with local primary schools. Year 10 and 11 pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme. Pupils play sport against other local schools and train as sports leaders so that they may organise games for younger pupils. A wide range of speakers from the local community comes into the school to speak to the pupils. The school has many links with local businesses, which helps it to facilitate the work experience placements for Year 10. Funding is received from the Education Action Zone to develop the study skills of Year 10 and 11 pupils. The school is a participant in Business in the Community. Exhibitions by local artists are housed at the school in the Silkin Gallery. A member of staff and a governor are on the management committee of Progress House, which runs courses for the community.

THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

70. More than one pupil in five at the school has special educational needs. This is a greater proportion of pupils than is the case for most secondary schools. Of these, 50 pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school is a designated county school for pupils with physical disabilities, but is also providing for pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties, specific learning difficulties/dyslexia and for others with general learning difficulties.

71. The provision meets the recommendations of the Code of Practice. The school is well placed to meet the regulations of the new Code of Practice when it is implemented in January 2002. Statutory requirements that relate to statements of special educational need are met in full.
72. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all the work of the school. Most of the time they take lessons with other pupils. In many of these lessons they are supported by teachers with knowledge and experience of pupils with special needs or by learning support assistants (LSAs) with a good level of experience and training. In these lessons in most subjects, pupils are achieving satisfactory standards and are making good progress because of the good quality of teaching and the good deployment of those who support them.
73. For lessons in English, mathematics, science, geography and history, pupils with special needs take their lessons in small groups called 'mini schools'. With the exception of mathematics, which is taught by a specialist teacher of the subject, teaching is by teachers with special needs experience. In each of these lessons pupils are supported by an additional teacher or LSA. Good lesson planning, teachers' good knowledge of the pupils, the good deployment of LSAs and the small size of each class are promoting satisfactory standards and good progress in each subject.
74. Those with the poorest language skills, including those who may be dyslexic, are withdrawn from lessons for specialist tuition in reading and spelling. For each pupil, learning targets are written in precise terms and teaching is specific and focused. The quality of teaching is good. Regular assessment, by standardised tests of reading and spelling, shows that the pupils are making good progress.
75. The School Development Centre (SDC) is an initiative to meet the particular needs of pupils who have difficulty in fully meeting the school's behavioural expectation and those who need support to return to school after long periods of absence. Pupils attend the SDC either full-time or for part of their school day. Up to twenty pupils may attend at any time. Teaching focuses on academic subjects and also on personal and social development. The very good relationship between teachers, LSAs and pupils and the very good knowledge the teacher and LSAs have of pupils' backgrounds contribute to the good quality of teaching and the good progress that pupils make, especially in aspects of their personal development such as self-esteem and self-confidence.
76. The provision for meeting the additional needs of pupils with dyslexia and those who have emotional and behavioural difficulties is good. The provision for meeting the additional needs of pupils with physical disabilities is limited by deficiencies in the accommodation of the Learning Support Base. This is small in size, the range of specialist equipment for physiotherapy is modest and the storage space insufficient. It affords too little privacy when pupils are working with the physiotherapist or physiotherapy technician. These faults disadvantage pupils by restricting the range of physiotherapy available to them.
77. The work of the special educational needs co-ordinator and of the head of the SDC in managing the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. It is based on the expectation of high standards and the entitlement of pupils to be fully included in all the work of the school. The good assessment procedures result in learning targets that are known to all teachers and are well used by many in planning their lessons. These, and the substantial commitment made in providing additional staff to support learning in a large number of lessons, help pupils with special educational needs to be full and valued members of the school and to make good progress.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	150
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	74

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	28	67	45	2	2	0
Percentage	4	19	45	30	1	1	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	799
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	257

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	50
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	138

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	70
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	45

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.1
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	82	67	149

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	45	48
	Girls	40	30	34
	Total	81	75	82
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (51)	50 (45)	55 (34)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (18)	32 (19)	24 (5)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	23	49	39
	Girls	32	36	32
	Total	55	85	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	37 (20)	57 (47)	47 (33)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (3)	31 (20)	19 (10)
	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	73	55	128

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	14	66	72
	Girls	20	51	55
	Total	34	117	127
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	27 (30)	91 (91)	99 (93)
	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	30
	National	39

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	8
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	775
Any other minority ethnic group	5

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	63	6
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	42
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	210

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.7%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	2207199
Total expenditure	2201955
Expenditure per pupil	3155
Balance brought forward from previous year	50919
Balance carried forward to next year	56163

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	799
Number of questionnaires returned	64

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	44	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	44	6	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	47	13	5	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	44	25	3	2
The teaching is good.	44	44	3	5	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	39	14	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	42	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	28	8	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	33	40	14	6	6
The school is well led and managed.	39	39	5	0	17
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	39	11	3	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	52	3	2	8

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The good quality teaching allows pupils to achieve well in relation to their previous standard.
- The imaginative and demanding curriculum provided for all pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Use the school disciplinary practices in a more rigorous and consistent manner.
- Provide pupils with the opportunity to explore literature from other cultures and traditions, and use this experience to provide pupils with a wider range of writing activities.

78. Attainment in English by the age of 14 (end of Key Stage 3) is below the national average. This was reflected in the Key Stage 3 SATs in 2000, with pupils achieving standards below the national average. When compared with schools with a similar intake, standards are average. Girls' attainment is higher than boys'. Standards in the most recent 2001 SATs improved slightly but are below those in science and similar to those in mathematics. Standards in English at the end of Key Stage 3 have improved since the last inspection.
79. The pupils' oral skills upon entry are below average. Teachers use good open-ended questioning to promote oral skills and regularly provide pupils with opportunities to discuss their work in pairs and small groups. They challenge the pupils' initial responses and encourage them to speak in greater detail and at length. Opportunities are also given for pupils to take part in simple role-play activities.
80. Reading skills at the age of 14 are below average. This is borne out by the schools' own annual reading assessment tasks. Whilst a minority of pupils display good reading habits and read books at home, many pupils read only at school; this applies particularly to boys. Although some pupils at Key Stage 3 read in a fluent manner, others lack expression and read in a hesitant manner. The pupils overall have sound technical reading skills, but lack reading comprehension skills and are not always able to interpret the ideas presented in the books that they read. The English department tackles this weakness by providing pupils with the opportunity to read a good range of literature and factual materials, although there are limited opportunities for pupils to read literature from other cultures and traditions. All pupils at Key Stage 3 visit the library once a week. During regular reading sessions in class, teachers often focus on reading for understanding and the development of appropriate vocabulary linked to the books that pupils read.
81. Although many pupils achieve well in their writing in relation to their prior learning, written work by the age of 14 remains below average. The good modules of written work provided by teachers at Key Stage 3 enable pupils to write in different styles, for different purposes and with a number of audiences in mind. Pupils, for example, write diary entries, character studies, letters and newspaper reports, all on a common theme. Many more able pupils, generally girls, write in an extended manner with few or no mistakes. A significant number of pupils still find it difficult to write in detail and at length, and to eradicate mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers

respond to this weakness by placing an appropriate emphasis on the development of those basic skills which will help pupils to improve their work.

82. Attainment in English by the age of 16 (end of Key Stage 4) is below average, with the results in the 2000 GCSE examinations for both language and literature below the national average. About a third of pupils achieved the national average for both GCSE language and literature. The pupils taking English achieved less well than they did in the average of all the subjects they took. Attainment in the 2001 examinations was broadly the same as in the previous year, with girls' A*-C grades double those of boys in both language and literature. GCSE grades in 2001 for both language and literature were higher than those for both mathematics and science. Standards in GCSE examinations have improved since the last inspection.
83. Many pupils make satisfactory progress in their oral skills at Key Stage 4, with high-attaining pupils responding well to the internally assessed speaking and listening activities which form part of their GCSE studies. In contrast to this, whilst many pupils develop good social oral skills, they are less confident in their ability to organise their thoughts in a logical and structured manner and give their opinions in clear, extended sentences. Attainment in speaking and listening by the age of 16 is below average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
84. Some pupils at Key Stage 4 develop sound critical reading and analytical skills as they respond to a challenging range of GCSE texts. Many pupils, however, because of the lack of regular reading habits, tend to read only at a surface level. They find it difficult to appreciate fully the writer's use of language to create character, setting and atmosphere. They likewise do not find it easy to interpret sub-text and the writer's use of inference. Overall, the standard of reading at the age of 16 remains below average.
85. The quality of the pupil's coursework is very much influenced by the amount of extra time that they are willing to invest in their studies outside lesson time. At its best, although these are in the minority, some high-attaining pupils, generally girls, produce good quality work. They plan their work well and draft and re-draft. As a result of this the quality of work improves with pupils able to make a secure and personal response to the questions that they are asked, well supported by relevant quotations. In contrast, many pupils rely on a simple understanding of the storyline and characters in the plays and stories they read without exploring those themes and underlying ideas that will gain them extra marks. Teachers respond well to this weakness by clearly focusing on those factors that help pupils to achieve higher grades. Despite this good support, overall standards of writing by the age of 16 are below average.
86. One of the most significant factors and influences on the standards achieved by pupils in their GCSE studies, as well as in Key Stage 3, is their attitude towards their work. Whilst many pupils take a positive approach to English activities and work with sustained interest and concentration, a significant minority of pupils, usually boys, take a passive approach to learning and make limited progress in lessons.
87. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good. Lessons are generally well planned, with learning objectives shared with pupils. The use of timed targets usually ensures that lessons are brisk. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils and use praise in an effective manner to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Most teachers have sound management and disciplinary skills, although occasions were observed when the school's disciplinary procedures could have been used in a more rigorous and consistent manner. At their best, the teachers display a strong personal enthusiasm for the work in hand, and promote a rigorous and animated working environment where good learning can take place.

88. The department provides pupils with an imaginative curriculum at both key stages, and uses good assessment and recording procedures to identify individual targets for improvement. Although now in schemes of work, there is not enough use of ICT. The department is led by a well-informed and forward-thinking manager. In the short time that he has been in post, he has, along with the hard-working members of the department, introduced strategies and supporting documents to help to raise standards. When these are firmly embedded in classroom practice, the department will be in a more secure position to move forward.

Drama

89. It was possible to observe only three drama lessons, one at Key Stage 3 and two at Key Stage 4. The overall provision is good. In the single lesson observed at Key Stage 3 the pupils achieved standards in line with expectations for their age. The lesson was well planned and organised, with a good balance between warm-up activities, drama games and improvisation. All pupils approached their work in a very positive manner, with their enjoyment of the subject an important factor in their self-discipline. They worked in small groups in a collaborative manner as they improvised a humorous scene about a disaster in a hair salon. Pupils worked with enthusiasm, first trying one approach, evaluating it, and then refining it. The teacher gave good support to groups of pupils without interfering with their control of their own work. The pupils recognised the importance of being a good audience, and listened to and applauded each other's efforts.
90. Attainment in drama at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. This is reflected in the 2000 GCSE examinations, with less than half the pupils achieving the national average for the subject. Results in the most recent 2001 examinations were well below the national average. The lessons seen at Key Stage 4 were mostly of groups that were predominantly pupils from the lower band. Although pupils bring a simple range of drama techniques to their work, many of them lack the confidence and ability to create characters in depth. They find it hard to explore the use of voice, dialect and accent appropriate to the characters that they create. They also lack confidence to use their bodies in order to represent people outside their own age range. In the two lessons seen, the pupils had difficulty in expressing emotions in order to create believable characters. They were happier to re-create characters based on television 'soaps'.
91. The quality of teaching in the three lessons observed was good. Lessons were well planned and organised. Work was challenging with teachers giving good support and advice to pupils. Teachers have a good working relationship with their pupils and have good disciplinary skills. This ensures that lessons are brisk and purposeful. The department is led by a well-informed and enthusiastic manager. The department provides a good range of extra curricular activities and makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' communication and social skills.

MATHEMATICS

Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- Clear educational vision and good management.
- The effective use of assessment data.

Areas for improvement

- Revise the policy to promote higher number skills throughout the school.
- Use information and communication technology more fully.
- Incorporate more mathematical investigations.

92. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 9 (Key Stage 3 SATs) in 2000 were well below the national average and well below the results achieved in similar schools. Results for 2001 were better, with more pupils attaining Level 6 or higher. The overall results were again well below average, although below average when compared with similar schools. The mathematics results were similar to those in English and below those in science. There is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils enter the school with results well below the national average. Their achievement whilst at the school is satisfactory and improving.
93. The standard of work observed confirms this gradual improvement. Pupils with average attainment in Year 9 are able, following intervention from the teacher, to develop and use an expression to find the size of squares in a shape formed by linking squares. Improved standards can be attributed, at least in part, to good teaching with suitably challenging work. For example, a group of Year 8 high-attaining pupils responded well to the effective use of time constraints and precise explanations delivered at a good pace. As a result, they were able to expand and later simplify algebraic expressions involving up to three unknown variables. The support provided by additional teachers and learning assistants in some lessons enables pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. Pupils in Year 9 are able accurately to draw and interpret conversion graphs involving currency and temperature. They are, however, unable to do the required calculations converting pounds to pesetas and dollars. They also understand how to identify positions using Cartesian coordinates in four quadrants. Year 7 pupils, with less than one term in the school, can identify lines of symmetry in non-standard shapes and respond well to firm but sensitive class management, but they are unable to transfer this knowledge to new situations.
94. The teachers' lesson plans are effective and are based on the detailed scheme of work. Lesson objectives are clearly set out but not always conveyed to the pupils and not compared with lesson outcomes. The school has begun to apply the National Numeracy Strategy with some good mental work used as an introduction to the lesson. The effective use of the plenary session has yet to be developed. Teachers use individual white boards effectively in mental work and to review previous work and consolidate learning. Pupils respond well to these boards. Insufficiently challenging work in a small minority of lessons leads to poor behaviour reducing the effectiveness of the learning.
95. GCSE results were well below the national average for grades A*-C in 2000 and 2001 and lower than the results in English and science. The results were similar for boys and girls. In 2000, the pupils did not achieve as well in mathematics as they did in the average of all the subjects that they took.
96. The standard of current work is better than in the recent examination results. For example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 solve simultaneous and quadratic equations at National Curriculum Level 7/8 and lower-attaining pupils are working at Level 5, solving simple linear equations.

97. High-attaining pupils in Year 11 at the beginning of a lesson showed a lack of understanding of basic ideas of trigonometry. After a clear explanation and following individual assistance by the teacher they found the length of the sides of triangles in many different situations using the rules of trigonometry and Pythagoras. Most pupils have a mature attitude in their learning. Pupils in Year 11 undertake mathematical investigations as part of their GCSE coursework. For example, high-attaining pupils investigate the movement of frogs given certain conditions whilst lower-attaining pupils establish a pattern allowing them to predict the number of handshakes of specified groups of people. Experience of this type of work is limited. Improved attainment was also seen when a group of Year 10 pupils changed the variable as subject of a formula. The teacher uses clear explanations moving from purely numerical equations to those involving up to four variables. The pupils are less sure when the operation of division is required. Teachers use textbooks effectively to enable pupils to learn independently.
98. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, good class management and effective classroom techniques enabled pupils to reflect triangles and other shapes in a given line. The introduction to a lesson required pupils to double sixteen three-digit numbers. A large majority of pupils did this accurately. A quiet learning atmosphere was achieved that continued despite one serious disruption that was dealt with quickly using the school's disciplinary procedure. A wide variety of teaching methods are used and the majority of pupils respond well but concentration is rarely maintained for the whole lesson.
99. The leadership and management of the department are good. The detailed schemes of work form a sound basis for the teachers' lesson plans. Formal monitoring of teaching and pupils' books takes place. In addition there is close co-operation in the department aided by the accommodation, a suite of five rooms linked together. The design does, however, cause some disruption with lesson interruption and external noise in some rooms. The code of behaviour is practised with teaching staff supporting each other. Assessment is well used to define underachieving groups of pupils with the curriculum modified in response. Assessment is also used to track the progress of individual pupils, identifying underachievement. The use of mathematical investigations at Key Stage 3, and to a lesser extent at Key Stage 4, is insufficient as is the use of ICT as an aid to learning and to complement the work in formal ICT lessons.
100. There is no effective whole school policy to involve other departments in consolidating the pupils' number skills. The pupils' progress in numeracy is mainly achieved by work in the mathematics department. There are, however, some examples where additional numeracy support is given. Calculations are used in science and history. Geography and science display data in charts and graphs. Science, geography and food science consolidate the reading and interpretation of scales. Two and three-dimensional drawing is part of the work in art, timescales occur in history and the measurement of angles takes place in science and geography.
101. Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved significantly since the last inspection and standards at Key Stage 4 have also risen. The quality of teaching remains good with the large majority of lessons good or better. The attitudes of the pupils are variable as last reported. The use of ICT is still limited but the assessment and the use of the data are much improved. The department now has a curriculum well matched to pupils with different levels of attainment, and a satisfactory range of different material to support pupils with special educational needs and more able pupils at Key stage 3.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning.
- All aspects of planning, including the new weekly planner.
- The teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and the inclusion of all pupils.
- The application of assessment, which is rapidly developing as a tool for improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Greater use of ICT.
- All science staff to follow the policy of discipline for learning.
- Monitoring and evaluation.
- Much apparatus is at the end of its useful life.

102. Standards are rising at a good pace in science. By the end of Year 9 standards in science, as shown by the Key Stage 3 SATs, were well below the national average in 2000, but they improved significantly in 2001. The performance of pupils in comparison with pupils in similar schools was average, whilst the gap between the performance of boys and girls was small. Attainment in science was better in 2001 than in English and mathematics.
103. The standards observed during the inspection at Key Stage 3 mirror test results and are below the nationally expected standard. The standards achieved by the boys and girls are broadly similar. Higher-attaining pupils at the age of 14 understand the electronic structure of the periodic table, knowing the first twenty elements in detail, and are able to apply this knowledge in new situations such as defining metals and how they differ from non-metals, and can construct formulae. Average-attaining pupils found that magnesium burns in air and yields a white ash; they can conduct a successful investigation of this quantitatively, but do not attempt to make predictions or to ensure a fair test, using repeated measurements to increase accuracy. Chemical reactions are written in word form, showing some limited application of new knowledge. Below-average-attaining pupils investigated how some chemicals are affected by the application of electricity, making a limited number of correct observations, but did not use or apply new knowledge. Some pupils with special educational needs are very determinedly increasing their knowledge of cell variation, able to recognise drawings of different cells and sometimes to talk about the job done by them, applying enormous concentration to the task. Across the Years 7 to 9 there is very good application of scientific method. At the highest-attaining levels this develops into high-level application of research methods.
104. Observation very much reflects the improvements in test results in 2001. Good progress in pupils' learning is made by the age of 14 with some pupils making very good progress. This is related to the high standard of teaching. Good progress in subject knowledge is combined with good development of personal qualities such as confidence and self-esteem. There is a good feeling in classes of, "I can do this". Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
105. Results achieved by pupils aged 16 in the GCSE double award science in 2000 were significantly below the national average for grades A*-C with one pupil achieving an A grade and 39 per cent achieving A*-C grades. The boys' results were closer to the national average for boys than girls' results were to the average for girls. Boys do a little better than girls. A very high proportion of pupils are entered for double award

science and almost all achieve grades A*-G; this is about the national average and is a creditable achievement. The 2001 results were similar. Results in 2001 for pupils achieving grades A*-C were higher in science than in mathematics but lower than in English.

106. In the work observed, standards in Year 11 (the end of Key Stage 4) are below national expectations, but a small number of pupils reach standards well above average. This mirrors the improvement in GCSE results in recent years and is well in line with predictions. A higher-attaining Year 11 pupil could use primary sources to investigate the properties in different groups of elements from the periodic table, developing this into a wide application of new knowledge in unfamiliar situations such as explaining chemical bonding. An average-attaining pupil, reaching a good level directly related to the very good teaching, could explain what a polymer is and quote several examples. He could research polymerisation using books to produce coherent knowledge. Using alkanes as examples, he could write equations for polymer formation and destruction. A group of lower-attaining pupils could investigate the relationship between distance and time and produce a line graph, but did not attempt to draw conclusions. Progress overall by the age of 16 is satisfactory, but some pupils make good and some excellent progress, whilst a minority make less than satisfactory progress. This is related to poor attitudes and behaviour. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in line with their individual plans. The pupils' standards in all years are linked to the adoption of an investigational style of teaching and learning, to which pupils have reacted enthusiastically.
107. Overall the quality of teaching is good. It is better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4, where some unsatisfactory teaching occurs, linked to poor behaviour and the lower level of challenge in some teaching schemes. The best teaching is linked to good investigation and encourages very many pupils to reach high levels of thought. Attitudes are good overall, but much better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4 where some behaviour was unsatisfactory or worse, but the majority of pupils show very good and often excellent behaviour as they engage in hard work. A group of pupils, almost all with special educational needs, gave rapt attention in a practical chemistry lesson, their excellent progress led by excellent teaching.
108. The department is very well managed and led. Monitoring of teaching and learning by senior management is effective. A wider programme led by the team leader would bring further improvement of focus. The team leader manages the strong teaching team with good educational direction. Improvement since the last inspection is good, with the major factors of good teaching, very good assessment, target-setting and use of full investigations. The level of challenge in single science groups is insufficient. Three rooms that are currently unsatisfactory are to be re-furbished in the spring from money already allocated for the purpose. Much equipment is old and needs to be replaced. There are insufficient quality textbooks, especially in Years 10 and 11.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning.
- Very good range of experiences offered to pupils.

Area for improvement

- Broaden the curriculum to include more art from different cultures.

109. Standards towards the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9) are average. This is a good achievement since the pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Most pupils acquire satisfactory levels of competence in observational drawing and many show sensitivity to tone in their work. Pupils use colour effectively in patterns and studies of Impressionist or Cubist artists. Constructions in three dimensions are strong features of the pupils' work. The pupils have a good representative art vocabulary, thus enhancing their language skills. They are acquainted with the work of prominent artists such as Van Gogh and Picasso, although not with art from other cultures such as Indian or African art. Good use is made of ICT, for example in designing Year 9 Futurist brochures. The pupils' number skills are enhanced in art lessons by the development of spatial awareness, measurement and estimation, judgement of proportion, angles and perspective. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in art lessons. This healthy picture of pupils' standards and progress is a consequence in large measure of very good teaching, provided by two outstanding practitioners who not only have excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject, but as artists are also able to impart to their pupils practical guidance to help them produce successful artwork. Lessons are well planned and timed, homework and sketchbooks are used creatively, assessment and target setting inform the pupils how they are doing and what needs to be improved. Pupils are well managed and standards of behaviour and attitudes to the subject are good. In this very positive context the quality of learning is very good, and pupils acquire their knowledge, understanding and art skills very well.
110. GCSE results in 2000 were above average for grades A*-C and A*-G and well above average in 2001. The pupils taking art and design achieved better than they did in the average of all the subjects that they took. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls.
111. In the work seen in Year 11 (the end of Key Stage 4) standards are above average. Progressing from average standards towards the end of Year 9, this is very good achievement. Pupils refine and develop their art knowledge, skills and understanding very well through research, studies in a variety of media in two and three dimensions, leading to large scale finished work, and through participation in workshops with visiting artists, such as the Royal Academy Outreach, Ivan Williams and David Hunt. By these experiences, figurative and landscape drawing and painting skills are improved. Year 10 pupils, for example, produce very good, large, chalk and charcoal studies of a seated model in which proportions and light effects are very well managed. The quality of teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers have the confidence to demonstrate techniques in a very telling fashion, which pupils respect and reflect in their very good responses. Such high quality provision leads pupils to become independent learners so that the quality of learning by pupils of all abilities is very good.
112. Since the last report, in which art was described as a strength of the school, GCSE standards have improved. Very good use continues to be made of the excellent small gallery within the school and other galleries to enhance learning. The generally very good picture provided by the 1996 report has been enhanced.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of the teaching.
- The standard of lesson plans and the planning reflected in the pupils' booklets.
- The quality of the accommodation and resources.

Areas for improvement

- Tackle the low attainment and unsatisfactory progress of a minority of pupils resulting from unsatisfactory attitudes and attendance.
- Making homework a more integral and important part of learning.

113. A scrutiny of the work of pupils early in Year 7 shows that girls attain at a higher level than boys. They have better handwriting, drawing skills, use a technical vocabulary better in their written work and generally take more pride in their work. Overall the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the standards expected nationally. There are few pupils working at Level 6 and above. The teachers' assessments are close to the standards observed. The standard of work in the present Year 9 is better than the standards recorded in previous years, but it varies, with electronics and food studies better than resistant materials and graphics. Graphical skills are unsatisfactory and do not improve sufficiently through the key stage. Sketching is poor and few instances are seen of proper isometric or orthographic drawing. This often spoils an otherwise good booklet of work. Overall, the pupils make satisfactory progress, with the girls making better progress than the boys. They have a more mature attitude and concentrate better in lessons. Poor attendance requires teachers to recap work from previous lessons, so retarding progress for those who were at school. The setting arrangements mean that there are more girls in the higher sets where learning is better.
114. The standards reached at the end of Key Stage 4 in the GCSE results in 2000 were, overall, well below national standards. There were wide variations between the subject areas. The better results were in areas where there was a predominance of girls in the class. The A*-C grade rate in child care and textiles was approaching the national average, food studies was about half the national average and resistant materials well below this. The 2001 results were better with significant improvements in almost all areas. In 2000 the pupils taking the subject did worse overall than they did in the average of all the subjects that they took. The standards seen in the present Year 11 food studies class are well above the recent GCSE results. This is the result of very good teaching and an insistence on high levels of practical skill. The progress made by the pupils at Key Stage 4 is good, and better than at Key Stage 3. Some pupils in Year 10 are benefiting from the change in syllabus from GCSE resistant materials to GNVQ manufacturing where there is more emphasis on practical tasks. There is an after-school class for pupils who wish to study textiles to GCSE, as the option choice at Key Stage 4 does not allow them to study the subject. The lesson seen was of high quality with commitment and enthusiasm shown by the teacher and pupils.
115. Low attainment and unsatisfactory progress are usually caused by absence and a lack of commitment, resulting in unfinished coursework folders and practical projects. There is considerable peer pressure on some boys not to succeed. The progress of pupils with special education needs is satisfactory when they are in a class with support for the teacher or where the work is interesting and stimulating. Some of

these pupils have behavioural problems and very low levels of concentration and application and their progress is unsatisfactory.

116. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good. More than half the lessons were good or very good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Lesson planning is a strength as is the planning of the booklets for pupils, which allow a proper transition from design to making and evaluation. All sections have an explanation on how pupils can obtain high marks. The teachers have good subject knowledge but some do not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils. Homework is set regularly but it is neither sufficiently challenging nor integrated well into the modules in Key Stage 3 or the GCSE courses. The pupils have mostly satisfactory attitudes, although in a few lessons the behaviour of a minority of pupils spoiled the lesson and teachers were too tolerant of such behaviour.
117. The department is managed well and the teachers work well as a team. Marking and assessment are very good and pupils are given targets to achieve. The department has used the information on pupils to set clear aims for the future. The department handbook is comprehensive, listing all the improvements made since the head of department was appointed three years ago as well as future goals. ICT is now integrated into the scheme of work but there is still a problem with the introduction of computer-aided design. Two teachers have been trained but problems with a licence to use the programme with the local authority network means that pupils are denied an important skill, which would enhance their course work folders considerably. Accommodation and the resources are of good quality and contribute considerably towards the good teaching and the pupils' progress. The department has shown good improvement since the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising
- Teaching is good, and very good at Key Stage 4.
- Geography makes a strong contribution to the development of basic skills.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
- Pupils are well informed about their progress.

Areas for improvement

- The achievement of some lower-attaining pupils at Key Stage 3.
- Opportunities for fieldwork.

118. Standards in geography are rising. Key Stage 3 pupils are well served by a progressive geography syllabus. Place, direction and distance are reinforced. Geographical knowledge is broadened by the study of contrasting environments and the geographical skills needed to interpret that knowledge are inculcated. By the end of the key stage, whilst levels of attainment remain below national expectations, most pupils have made good progress, although lower-attaining pupils lack fluency and confidence in manipulating geographical information and are insecure in their use of geographical terms.
119. Good, and, for many, very good, progress is sustained through Key Stage 4. GCSE results are improving year on year. In 2001, for example, 46 per cent of the entry gained grades A*-C in geography, lower than nationally, but pupils did significantly

better in geography than they did in the average of all other subjects that they took. Girls outperformed boys as in the national picture but the gap has narrowed.

120. The quality of teaching is a strength of the department with very good teaching at Key Stage 4 and good teaching at Key Stage 3 where class control is taxed by the poor behaviour of a minority of lower-attaining pupils. The lowest attainers are well taught within the "mini-school". The needs of pupils with special educational needs are understood, specifically targeted, appropriately supported by ancillary staff and well served. Provision is made for gifted and talented pupils in Key Stage 4 in after-school sessions, and there is greater emphasis on GCSE coursework than previously. The contribution which geography makes to the development of basic skills is a particular strength. Year 7 pupils analysing survey data were immersed in numeracy as they toyed with percentages and fractions to construct a scaled bar graph. Their geographical interpretation of the graph was well supported by a writing frame. A year 10 class confidently used a spreadsheet to illustrate their coursework and extension material, involving Internet research, was available.
121. Good planning for a variety of activities captures the pupils' interest. Lessons are well paced with clear and stated objectives. A Year 8 unit on Italy, for example, was assessed in a well-planned lesson that required pupils to describe photographs from a pilot's viewpoint. It succeeded in its aims of drawing the various geographical strands together and at the same time provided an excellent opportunity for extended creative writing.
122. Pupils clearly enjoy the subject and an increasing number continue geography into Key Stage 4 but many Key Stage 3 pupils lack the ability to work independently, seeking assistance too readily. Their concentration span is short and they need the effective lesson structure and the constant drive that the good teaching in the department offers them. Their behaviour is generally good and they contribute willingly and enthusiastically in question and answer sessions, revealing productive relationships with teachers. Where the poor behaviour of a minority takes time to check, as in a Year 8 lower set lesson, learning for the whole group is compromised and far less is achieved than intended. Assessment is tied to levels in Key Stage 3 and to grades in Key Stage 4 and is strongly developed so that pupils and teachers have a clear understanding of progress.
123. The department is ably led by a committed and enthusiastic teacher. Its work is well monitored and development planning is driven by a shared commitment to raise standards. The focus of such planning is the further development of ICT, strategies to challenge the highest-attaining pupils, and the extension of opportunities for fieldwork. As a result, standards have risen since the previous inspection. The head of department is now well supported by specialist subject colleagues and geography makes a good contribution to the work of the school.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- The pupils learn well.
- The assessment of pupils' progress is very good.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.

Areas for improvement

- Improved study support to turn satisfactory achievement in lessons into good GCSE results.

124. Standards in history, although below the national average, are improving. By the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils have a firm grasp of chronology. They are also beginning to handle work from sources well, as was shown in a Year 9 lesson, where pupils used evidence effectively to judge whether Richard Arkwright had been a hero or a villain. Their oral work is often good. The level of achievement, however, especially that of lower-attaining pupils, is limited by weak written work, which is often incomplete. Many pupils do not retain knowledge for very long after the lesson.
125. At Key Stage 4, the results in 2000, although a great improvement on those of 1999, were still below the national average. 44 per cent of candidates gained grades A*-C. In 2001, there was a slight improvement and two candidates gained an A grade whilst all gained at least an A*-G grade. The entry for the subject is small, being only 19 in 2001, with 3 pupils who were not entered, owing to their failure to complete coursework. Numbers in the current option groups are much larger. Girls outperform boys significantly. In work seen, most pupils at Key Stage 4 are performing in line with national average. They use evidence from sources well, as seen in a Year 11 lesson where pupils considered the effect of writers like Dickens on the treatment of the poor in the 1840s. They are able to draw relevant conclusions and to select information. There are good examples of extended writing, an essential preparation for coursework. In order to improve weak recall skills, the department sets effective regular short exercises in class revision. Weekly after-school revision classes are available for Year 11 pupils, but not many attend. Achievement is limited for many pupils by a lack of study support outside school, especially in the vital weeks before the summer examinations.
126. The quality of teaching and learning is good across both key stages and often very good at Key Stage 4. Lessons are well planned and there is a good pace to the activities. Expectations are high and pupils are challenged to think for themselves about the problems of the past. They are particularly encouraged to do well, by building the skills of self-evaluation and by the effective use of praise to build self-esteem. Teaching strategies effectively aim to raise the achievement of boys by a good variety of activities and by keeping them fully on task. Pupils work with good interest and concentration, although there are some instances of time wasting by lower-attaining pupils at Key Stage 3. The effectiveness of learning is shown by the 'recap' session at the end of each lesson, where pupils demonstrate their learning by reporting back the 'five big ideas' they would take away from the history lesson. Pupils with special educational needs have tasks appropriately matched to their attainment and are well supported by the teachers. Overall, these pupils make good progress. There is a developing use of ICT, as in a Year 7 lesson where pupils carried out good research on medieval village life, using the Internet. Relationships in the classroom are good, both between pupils and with the teachers. Class management is good and the pupils are mostly well behaved.
127. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department is the only specialist teacher of history and works hard to support the non-specialists who teach the subject. There is some monitoring of teaching, with frequent informal discussions. The results of professional training are shared in the department. Schemes of work have been thoroughly overhauled and there is very detailed documentation illustrating policies and lesson plans. The scheme of assessment is very good, effectively monitoring the performance of individual pupils and enabling realistic targets to be set across both key stages, of which the pupils are aware. The

improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department continues to build on the strengths commended at that time. The quality of written work has been improved by more focused teaching and by stressing basic skills. There is a good literacy policy, which encourages pupils to read well and to understand more clearly what they are writing about.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Strengths

- Strong team of teachers and support staff, very well matched to the demands of the ICT curriculum.
- Standards of teaching and learning in ICT are good, and pupils work well in response to this.
- The accommodation and resources are very good. Pupils show respect for materials and equipment.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils receive insufficient opportunities to measure, control and automate events using ICT.
- The use of ICT in other subjects is insufficiently developed.

128. Standards of work by the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9) are in line with national expectations. Throughout the key stage the pupils make good progress in lessons, reflecting the very high levels of subject knowledge displayed by their teachers and their strong teaching skills. Pupils display high levels of confidence using sophisticated software packages, as seen in their *Powerpoint* presentations in Year 7 and use of *Access* in Year 9 to create and interrogate a customer database for a cycle shop. They continue to develop these skills in data handling and presentation, adding the ability to model, using spreadsheets, and appropriate search techniques to locate information from the Internet for inclusion in their work.

129. The quality of teaching is generally good. Clear planning and explicit learning objectives are characteristic of the provision, with a brisk pace maintained in most lessons. Relationships with pupils are good, and they respond with enthusiasm and interest, working both independently and collaboratively according to the task. As a result of this positive approach, pupils learn quickly and consolidate their experience from earlier lessons. Teachers spend much of their time working individually with pupils, offering advice and feedback on progress through challenging and differentiated tasks. By the end of the key stage the pupils are able to select appropriate software to perform specific functions and are becoming critical users of the technology.

130. At Key Stage 4 standards overall are in line with national expectations, although for pupils taking the subject to GCSE in 2000, attainment continued its upward trend and was well above the national average. From a relatively high level of entry, 76 per cent gained grades A*-C, compared to 54 per cent nationally. The pupils taking ICT achieved better than they did in the average of all the subjects that they took. The 2001 results were rather lower with 63 per cent reaching grades A*-C and attainment remained above average.

131. Teaching is generally good and sometimes very good, with teachers setting high expectations to secure productive learning and sound standards. Consequently,

progress throughout the key stage is good, although some poor behaviour and low levels of concentration in class hamper the attainment of a few individuals. A GNVQ course has recently been introduced and through this pupils increasingly develop an awareness of audience, adapting their work to suit the purpose, as seen in the Silkin Art Gallery project.

132. The strong departmental team regularly reviews practice, using assessment to monitor and evaluate pupil performance, before revising teaching styles and materials accordingly. This is effective in improving quality, for example where advice is sought from Learning Support to ensure that tasks for lower-attaining pupils contribute to literacy and are compatible with the school's wider learning strategies.
133. Since the previous inspection there have been significant advances in examination performance, and issues raised about ICT resources have been addressed decisively. Although ICT is used well in some areas of the wider curriculum, for example in art to manipulate images and in geography to interpret data from fieldwork, there is still a need to promote further the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects, particularly where there is a specific ICT reference in the programme of study. Likewise, pupils should be given opportunities to develop their experience of ICT for sensing, controlling and data logging, in addition to a theoretical knowledge and paper exercises.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teaching is often good.
- Very good teaching and learning occur in some classes in Years 7 and 8.

Areas for improvement

- The inattention and poor behaviour of a significant minority of disruptive pupils inhibits not only their own progress but also that of other pupils.

134. At Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are below the national average. However, taking into account pupils' prior learning and abilities, achievement is usually at least satisfactory and is often good or better. Listening skills are quite well developed, a result of pupils hearing their teachers' usually consistent use of the foreign language in the classroom. Speaking is good when pupils are given frequent opportunities to practise the language in a variety of ways. Paired work is effective, especially when introduced at the right time, as with a Year 7 French class where pupils were able to talk about their school subjects and give their opinions of them. Reading is sound, while reading aloud is good, as in a Year 9 German class where pupils were learning how to use prepositions of place to give the position of articles of furniture in a room. They read their prepared scripts quite fluently and with good pronunciation. This lesson also pointed up the generally clear way in which grammatical structures are explained to and learned by the pupils. By Year 9, the quality and range of pupils' writing is satisfactory, though more could be demanded of the more able. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, often benefiting from specific in-class support. Throughout the key stage, particularly in the first two years, the pupils' keen interest and good behaviour supplement the good teaching to ensure effective learning and good progress. Where, as in the case of one Year 9 class, behaviour is poor, with many pupils ignoring the teacher and being very noisily ill mannered, achievement is well below what it should be.

135. In 2000, German was the only modern language taken at GCSE. 91 per cent of the year group were entered, 30 per cent of whom achieved grades A*-C, well below the national average but still representing fair achievement. In 2000, the girls did better than in the average of all their other subjects whilst the boys did worse. In 2001, the proportion of A*-C grades rose to 37 per cent, a significant improvement. Of the candidates entered for French GCSE in 2001, only five per cent achieved grades A*-C (compared with 12 per cent in 1999), results which give serious cause for concern.
136. In the lessons observed at Key Stage 4, standards of attainment were below national averages, though this represents satisfactory achievement. There are no pupils doing French in Year 11 but the Year 10 pupils are making good progress, which means that standards here are significantly different from those of the most recent GCSE results. The two teachers of French are relatively new appointments, including the head of department, and the quality of teaching is good. This has already had a positive effect at Key Stage 3, an improvement that should have a similar impact on GCSE French results in 2003. Although many pupils at Key Stage 4 are slow to mature and there is still unsatisfactory behaviour, most pupils are interested in their work and want to do well. Such positive attitudes, encouraged by effective teaching, have borne fruit in the three-year upward trend in GCSE results in German. Listening skills continue to develop and are largely dependent on the teachers' use of the foreign language. Speaking is reasonable but pupils are insufficiently challenged to communicate without a script. In the case where demotivated pupils disrupt a lesson, the more able tend to be very quiet. Writing becomes quite strong, with pupils able to handle a variety of tenses in a range of tasks including formal letters, as Year 11 pupils use imagination to book accommodation in a German hotel.
137. The management of modern languages is satisfactory. Departmental documentation is good. Despite the small number of teachers, French and German each has its own head of department rather than an overall head of modern languages. One head of department is successful and experienced, the other new. They work closely together. Such good collaboration should continue to develop the departments' monitoring and evaluation. Since the last inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement in some important areas. Pupils' speaking is now more competent, although there is still room for further development; English is used much less in the classroom; lessons are clearly organised and generally led at an appropriately challenging pace; the use of ICT has increased, at least at Key Stage 3. Teachers expect more of the pupils, although still not enough of the more able pupils. There has been little change in the restlessness that still occurs in lessons or with the number of boys who are silly and disruptive, For the great majority of the pupils, the one-hour lessons are still too long for foreign language learning.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and pupils achieve well in lessons.
- GCSE results have been significantly well above the national average for the last two years.
- Pupils show good attitudes to learning and are well behaved in lessons.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are very good.
- Opportunities for pupils to receive instrumental lessons and to take part in extra-curricular activities are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils in Years 7 - 9 are given insufficient opportunities to use ICT to develop their composing and performing skills.
- Schemes of work do not identify clearly the composing and performing skills that pupils are expected to develop from Year 7 to Year 9.
- There is no scheme of work for Years 10 and 11.

138. By the age of 14, the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils' attainment in music is below national expectations. This is because pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below national expectations and because their performing and composing skills are underdeveloped at the school. Year 9 pupils can play melodies with simple rhythms with their right hands and use appropriate keyboard fingering but their playing often lacks fluency and does not include, for example, the addition of a chordal accompaniment played with the left hand. The pupils have a good understanding of using the notes of a scale to compose melodies in the style of a minuet. In a Year 9 lesson pupils in the upper band notated their melodies using staff notation and used the keyboards to refine their work. The task was confined, however, to a single melody with the rhythm provided on the worksheet and did not include composing devices such as chords. This restricted pupils' creativity and their ability to achieve at a higher level. Higher-attaining pupils and those learning instruments were given the same task and consequently did not make enough progress by the end of the lesson. In a Year 9 lesson good teaching enabled pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. The task had been adapted to meet their needs and the teacher kept the pace of the lesson moving, resulting in pupils concentrating and behaving well. No significant difference was observed between the attainment of boys and girls.

139. In 2000, the GCSE results were well above the national average with all pupils achieving the higher grades A* - C. The 2001 results were slightly lower. Of the seven pupils who were entered for GCSE at the end of Year 10, six achieved grade A. GCSE results have been significantly higher in the last two years than previously with pupils generally achieving better results in music than in their other subjects. By the age of 16, the attainment of the pupils, who include those who took the GCSE examination early in Year 10, is above average. This is because all pupils play instruments and much lesson and extra-curricular time is spent in practice. Also each pupil has extra time every week for composing on computer with support from a visiting tutor. The pupils' musical skills are better developed than at the time of the last inspection. They can compose well-structured pieces using devices such as ostinato (repeated accompaniment melodies) and chord sequences. The pupils' individual and ensemble performing skills are generally above average. The listening skills of those pupils who will be taking their GCSE examination in the summer are below average.

Provision for higher-attaining pupils is very good as they can be entered for GCSE in Year 10 and afterwards follow the Advanced Subsidiary course in music in Year 11.

140. The quality of teaching is good overall; however, there are weaknesses in planning for the higher-attaining pupils at Key Stage 3 and in integrating activities to ensure a more equal development of performing, composing and appraising skills. In a Year 7 lesson, good use of demonstration and short achievable tasks led to well focused pupils making good progress in learning to play the tune of *Good King Wenceslas*. Teaching is good at Key Stage 4, although it was possible to observe only one Year 10 lesson. Lessons are generally well planned and teachers support pupils well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their own musical skills effectively.
141. Opportunities for pupils to learn to play a wide range of instruments and to participate in a wide range of activities, including steel bands, wind band, choir, keyboard club and recorder group, are very good and involve a large proportion of the pupils. This represents a very significant improvement since the previous inspection. The four steel bands are very popular and in great demand to perform outside school. The standard achieved by the Year 11 band is excellent. These well-supported opportunities contribute greatly to the school's social and cultural development of pupils.
142. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has done much to raise the profile of music within the school. Evidence of this is the increased number of pupils who opt for music at GCSE. This is a busy department with strongly committed staff who give much extra time to the work of the department. There is regular monitoring of teaching and learning. Detailed schemes of work support teaching in Years 7-9, but there is a lack of planning to support the teaching of both GCSE and AS courses at Key Stage 4. Since the last inspection pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons have improved. Homework is set regularly and there are now very good procedures for assessing pupils' work. There has been some improvement in the provision of ICT resources and pupils in Years 10 and 11 have opportunities to use music sequencing software for composing but ICT resources are still insufficient to enable the department to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Most teaching is good.
- The department is well managed.
- Pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are mainly positive.

Areas for Improvement

- Grouping arrangements to ensure higher levels of progress by all pupils.

143. The work seen in most Year 7 groups indicates that skill levels are low when pupils are admitted to the school. Most classes are engaged in activities that are new to them, such as basketball, and many pupils do not possess the ball-handling skills to enable them to be successful. Most can swim but few have developed a good style in their strokes and most have low levels of water fitness and tire quickly. In gymnastics, progress is better and this is because teachers set objectives for learning that are not

prescriptive but challenge pupils to improve on what they can already achieve in balances, rolling and travel. Standards relating to their age are good and girls' performance is a little better than boys'. Their sequences show better control and are more inventive. By the age of 14, overall attainment has been raised much nearer to average levels, although some pupils, mainly boys, have a negative approach to their work and this lowers standards and slows progress. This weakness occurs where tasks are over-prescriptive and where the grouping of girls together with boys restricts achievement for both.

144. By the time they leave school, most pupils have reached the expected average level of attainment. GCSE results in the year 2000 matched national average standards for A*-C grades. Boys performed better than girls and achieved better than average results. In 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades fell to 36 per cent, well below the national level. The department's analysis indicates that the fall was expected on the basis of validated prediction techniques and that this group of pupils exceeded their targets. Almost all these older pupils reach high levels of personal fitness. This is achieved through hard work and commitment to the tasks set by teachers. Both girls and boys demonstrate energy and enthusiasm for this type of work when in circuit training and when they are working in single gender groups. Most will strive hard to reach or improve previously recorded standards. There are pupils who do not participate in physical education lessons as regularly as required. The number is not large but it is significant and greater amongst girls than boys. It is associated with the school's continuing difficulty in ensuring that all pupils attend school regularly and participate in all lessons with full support from home.
145. Overall the quality of teaching is good. Objectives for learning are clearly set at the beginning of lessons and teachers know their subject well. Most pupils work eagerly and enjoy their lessons and especially so when clear targets are set both in terms of behaviour and progress. The learning of boys in mixed groups is less successful than in all boy groups and the same is true for girls.
146. The department is well managed and led by a committed and capable head of department. Much has been achieved in a relatively short time in revising the department's assessment arrangements to ensure that they have become more in line with those for the whole school. The accommodation for physical education is in the form of a joint use sports hall designed for both leisure users and school physical education. The inevitable compromises between the two purposes means that the facilities limit the department's moves towards the spirit and intention of the National Curriculum for physical education. The outdoor facilities are open to the public, with significant risks to the pupils' health and well being, and the school has insufficient control over these areas to reduce risks to its pupils.
147. There have been improvements since the last inspection. Standards, as measured by GCSE results, have been raised, teaching standards are higher and the arrangements for assessment have been improved. The department has begun to make more use of approved statistical data to predict levels of attainment and to plan for the more regular tracking of the pupils' progress in all years. It is thus well placed to make further improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good organisation: well-planned courses and thorough, formal teaching.
- Homework booklets in Years 7-9 that complement lessons and develop study skills.
- Good marking of pupils' work, encouraging and offering constructive criticism.

Areas for improvement

- Greater variety of activities within lessons to make learning more interesting.
- The management of pupils' behaviour in some classes.
- The criteria for assessing pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 are not sharply defined.

148. At the age of 14 (end of Key Stage 3) standards are below the national average. Pupils make satisfactory progress through sound teaching and acquire a secure knowledge of basic beliefs, worship and religious ceremonies in Christianity and other world religions. More capable pupils understand how beliefs influence one's lifestyle. In a very effective Year 9 lesson, the teacher's use of video case studies of Christians serving the community helped pupils understand the practical outworking of Christ's teaching in the parables. In their work on miracles, many pupils function at the level of description, not bringing out the spiritual significance of the event. They find it difficult to look up Bible references and summarise the story, although for some pupils, mainly boys, there is a reluctance to apply themselves fully to the task. In a very few lessons this attitude leads to inappropriate behaviour that adversely affects the pupils' progress. Lower-attaining pupils make good progress in smaller groups, where materials are adapted to their needs and teachers are able to give them individual support. The pupils' work is marked thoroughly, but there is no system for recording pupils' progress and the assessment criteria are too general.
149. At the age of 16 (end of Key Stage 4) standards are below the national average. The results on the GCSE short course in 2000 were well below the national average and down on the previous year. By contrast, the 2001 results show a marked improvement, comparing favourably with the school's averages in the core subjects. Overall, boys and girls did equally well at the higher grades but there were more boys at the lowest grades. This reflects the attitude of a significant number of boys who find the subject uninteresting and fail to complete homework.
150. Current standards in Year 11 are below average overall but up to expectation given the pupils' prior attainment. Teaching is satisfactory and most pupils make reasonable progress on the course, covering topics well in their class notes, and benefit from a detailed revision booklet in preparation for examinations. Higher-attaining pupils develop their own views on moral issues well, using religious teaching on the sanctity of life to inform their views on issues such as euthanasia, although the majority of pupils do not explain their views in sufficient detail. They are not thinking through their position, taking account of religious and secular arguments to reach reasoned conclusions. A significant number of pupils, mainly boys, are not sufficiently interested in the subject to gain the necessary understanding. Lower-attaining pupils are achieving appropriate standards on the new entry-level certificate. In a lesson on the Good Samaritan, carefully prepared materials helped them apply the teaching of the parable to modern situations.

151. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and in half the lessons observed it was good. It was unsatisfactory in one lesson, where a reference task was not adapted for pupils who found it too difficult, and their behaviour deteriorated. In general, tasks are graduated to meet pupils' needs in the two ability bands, but there are insufficient learning materials for some of the middle groups. At its best, the teaching builds to a position where pupils gain spiritual insight, as in a lesson where the impact of the Hillsborough memorial service was felt. Teachers pay close attention to literacy, making sure that pupils understand subject vocabulary and religious concepts. Some of the teaching is too text bound, allowing little variety of activity within the lesson, other than question and answer discussion. Consequently pupils' interest and concentration wane. ICT was used to good effect in a Year 7 lesson on the Jewish synagogue and pupils gained a lot from this way of learning through 'virtual reality'. As yet, the use of ICT to support learning is not planned in any detail.
152. The subject is well managed. There is efficient organisation of documentation and resources to equip non-specialists to plan their lessons and there is a very good programme of homework tasks at Key Stage 3. The time allocated for monitoring is used well to support teaching and the department benefits from the headteacher's line management and the involvement of a committed link governor. Since the previous inspection, satisfactory progress has been made to establish the GCSE short course and a certificate course in Years 10 and 11. More formal teaching and regular testing have produced improved results this year. There is insufficient variety in teaching to engage the interest of those pupils, mainly boys, whose reluctant attitude is evident in the superficial quality of their work.