

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHAM LANE SCHOOL

Nuneaton

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125741

Headteacher: Dr R. T. Tetlow

Reporting inspector: Mr R. Palmer

31198

Dates of inspection: 5th – 7th November 2001

Inspection number: 190810

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: Shanklin Drive
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Warwickshire

Postcode: CV10 0BJ

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J. Sidwell

Date of previous inspection: 4th November 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Higham Lane School is a co-educational, community, comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years situated in the town of Nuneaton. The school has 1215 pupils, is bigger than most other secondary schools and is greatly over-subscribed. Pupils are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. They come mainly from three local primary schools in the town and up to 15 other primary schools. Nearly four pupils in every ten come from outside the school's traditional catchment area. The attainment of pupils on entry at age 11 is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (one in every 30 pupils) is well below the national average. The proportion (one in 14) of pupils for whom English is an additional language, is higher than in most schools, but none are at an early stage of learning English. One in twelve pupils are of non-white ethnic background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, one in every eight, is below average. Most of these pupils have specific or moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs, about one in 50, is below average. Pupils of Year 11 were away from school on work experience during the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Higham Lane School is a very good school. It provides a very good quality of education for pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment. The very good leadership and management of the headteacher and the good support provided by the governing body and senior staff are important factors in the school's continuing success. Pupils' results in GCSE examinations by the end of Year 11 are well above national averages. These results represent very good achievement based on pupils' prior attainments. Achievement is very good because expectations of both teachers and pupils are high. Within a caring and friendly environment, pupils work hard and respond very positively to the good teaching they receive. The school has many strengths and few weaknesses. It provides very good value for money because pupils improve their standards of work considerably during their time at the school.

What the school does well

- Pupils' attainment in external examinations is well above average. It represents very good achievement by the end of Year 9 and very good achievement at the end of Year 11.
- The quality of teaching is good. It has a positive influence on pupils' learning.
- Learning is very good because pupils have very positive attitudes and want to do well.
- The very good leadership of the headteacher, supported well by senior staff, ensures that standards remain high and that the quality of education continues to improve.
- Through active participation in an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities, pupils improve their work in many subjects and enhance their personal development.

What could be improved

- GCSE results in history are improving but are not as good as results in other subjects.
- Attainment at the age of 16 in mathematics, though well above average, is not as high as in English and science in Years 10 and 11. It is not high enough for some high-attaining pupils.
- Pupils make insufficient use of their good skills in information and communication technology (ICT) to develop their work in most subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the previous inspection in 1996 is good. The school has done well to consolidate and build upon its previous strengths. Results and achievement in external examinations taken by pupils at the ages of 14 and 16 remain high. The performance of boys in GCSE examinations has improved. It was slightly better than that of girls in GCSE examinations in 2001. The school continues to provide a caring and positive environment for purposeful learning. The quality of teaching remains good; at times it is very good and occasionally is excellent. Pupils' attitudes to work are very positive. Leadership and management continue to make strong contributions to the school's many successful developments and ensure that pupils receive a very good quality of education. Progress has been good in tackling the key issues identified in the previous inspection. Pupils now work more independently. The provision of resources in the library has increased and is good. The library is more often available for use by pupils. Financial management is very effective in planning for capital replacement. Cost-effectiveness remains very good. The programme for personal, social and health education has improved considerably and is good. The school now provides good opportunities for pupils to gain insight into the values and beliefs of other cultures. Statutory requirements for pupils' entitlements to subjects of the curriculum are in place. However, the school still does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of an act of daily collective worship.

STANDARDS

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

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

Results in the national tests for 14-year-olds were well above average in 2001. Results in English, mathematics and science have been well above average in all three subjects in all of the last five years. These results indicate very good achievement for boys and girls of all levels of attainment when compared with pupils' previous attainment in the national tests taken at the age of 11. Compared with the results of similar schools, results in 2001 were above average in English, mathematics and science. Results are improving at a rate similar to the national improvement. This is a good achievement for the school because its results at the time of the previous inspection were already well above the national average. The standards of work seen in classes in Year 9 are currently well above average in English, mathematics and science.

GCSE results have been well above the national average in all of the last five years. Results are improving at a rate similar to the national improvement. Results in 2001 were well above average in nearly all subjects. In 2001, the GCSE results were average when compared with the results achieved in similar schools. They indicate very good achievement when compared with pupils' prior attainment two years earlier in the national tests for pupils aged 14. Boys and girls both achieve GCSE results that are well above average. The performance of boys has improved in recent years. In 2001, a slightly higher proportion of boys than girls achieved five or more GCSE results at grades A*-C. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in all years. On balance, pupils who are gifted or talented make

good progress. Pupils of all other levels of attainment, including pupils of minority ethnic heritage and those for whom English is an additional language achieve very well in Years 7 to 11.

Standards of work observed in classes confirm the well above average standards suggested by test and examination results in 2001. Standards are very good in literacy. They are good in numeracy. Pupils generally make insufficient use of their good ICT skills to enhance their work in many subjects because there is a shortage of computing equipment. The school did well to exceed the suitably challenging targets set for performance in GCSE examinations in 2001.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have very positive attitudes, are very attentive and concentrate well in class. They are keen to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils respect one another and take their learning seriously.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils mature well. They benefit from many good opportunities to exercise initiative and to take responsibility. They work well together in small groups and in class. Racial harmony is very good.
Attendance	Attendance is well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is below average.

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.

On balance, the quality of teaching is good in all years. It is often very good and occasionally excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching is effective in meeting the needs of all pupils, although the provision for pupils who are gifted or talented varies from very good in some subjects to satisfactory in others. Throughout the school, teaching is very good in English and is good in mathematics and science. In the few satisfactory lessons, the pace of learning was sometimes not quick enough. The teaching of literacy is very good in most subjects. The teaching of numeracy is good.

The quality of pupils' learning is very good in Years 7 to 11 because pupils want to achieve as well as they can. In many lessons, pupils' progress is very good, because pupils and teachers have high expectations, pupils work very hard and enthusiastically and teachers use a good variety of methods to keep pupils' interest throughout the lesson. Teachers make increasingly effective use of assessment of pupils' work and progress to detect any underachievement. They set suitable targets for pupils to improve their work. Very good relationships among pupils and between teachers and pupils create a purposeful atmosphere for working. Pupils of all levels of attainment have very positive attitudes and behave very well. The result is that work usually proceeds at a brisk pace even in lessons in which

teaching has a few shortcomings. Pupils know what they are expected to learn and how they can improve, because teachers plan the lessons very well to ensure good progression, share the lesson's objectives with the class and frequently review pupils' progress. Pupils enjoy the work because it is usually of sufficient difficulty to make most of them think hard. They enjoy working independently. Judgements about the quality of teaching and learning in Year 11 are based on scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, records of their prior attainment and discussions with some pupils and teachers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is relevant to the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment. Provision for personal, social and health education has improved considerably and is good. Pupils enrich their learning experiences through active participation in an excellent and wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. These pupils make progress that is much better than could be expected because they receive very good teaching and support that are directed effectively to meet their particular needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. These pupils achieve very well because they receive work of appropriate difficulty and have the motivation to succeed. The few pupils at an early stage of learning English receive very good, specialist support that enables them to make very good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision is very good for pupils' social, moral and cultural development. That for spiritual development is satisfactory. Because the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship, the opportunities for spiritual development are restricted.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal and academic development are very effective in helping pupils to mature and to improve their achievements.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher, supported well by senior staff provides a very clear direction for improvement and makes suitably challenging demands of staff and pupils. The management in subjects is good. Strategies for maintaining high standards have led to improvements in teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and monitor the school's progress effectively. They are supportive and carry out their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school makes effective use of data to assess how well it is doing. It lacks complacency and seeks to gain improvements even in subjects in which standards are already high. Suitable systems are in place to monitor teaching and learning.
The strategic use of	Very good. The school makes very effective use of its limited staffing,

resources	accommodation and learning resources. Financial management is very good. The school seeks the best possible value for money. It relates its spending decisions appropriately to its educational priorities.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils like school, are expected to work hard and achieve well.• Behaviour is very good. Pupils' personal development is good.• Teaching is good.• Extra-curricular activities are very good.	<p>Some parents want improvements in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reports about pupils' progress;• the quality or amount of homework;• communication with the school.

Inspectors strongly support the positive views expressed by parents. They also agree that reports could be better. Reporting in subjects such as English and mathematics is usually informative and helpful for parents and pupils to know how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, the school recognises that the reports about progress are generally too vague. It has good plans to improve their quality. In respect of homework, this is usually of good quality and suitable amount. Homework plays an important part in pupils' good or better achievement. Inspectors disagree with those parents who feel that the school does not do enough to communicate with them. The logbooks that were seen indicate a good dialogue between parents and school. An appropriate number of consultation evenings are held for parents to discuss pupils' progress with teachers. The school sends out very good information to parents such as the prospectus and letters. There is a suitable home/school agreement. Parents serve on the governing body. The parents' and teachers' association organises social events and acts as a sounding board for policies.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils' attainment in external examinations is well above average. It represents very good achievement by the end of Year 9 and very good achievement at the end of Year 11.

1. When they enter the school at the age of 11, pupils' overall attainment is usually above the national average. It is below the average for schools that contain a similar proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals. The attainment of pupils in Year 7, as measured by their results in the national tests taken at the age of 11, in English, mathematics and science matches the national average. It is below the average for pupils in similar schools in mathematics and is well below that average in English and science.

2. Pupils' results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are well above average. Overall, the results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above those achieved by pupils in similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE results at grades A*-C in 2001 was above that achieved by pupils in similar schools. When compared with their previous attainment, these results represent very good achievement by the end of Year 9 and further, very good achievement by the end of Year 11. Pupils of all backgrounds and levels of prior attainment make very good progress throughout the school. Standards of work seen in classes and in scrutiny of pupils' work are similar to those attained in external examinations recently. Pupils are making very good progress and producing work that is well above average.

3. In 2001, results in the national tests for 14-year-olds were well above average. Results in English, mathematics and science have been well above average in these three subjects in all of the last five years. On balance, these results indicate very good achievement, for boys and girls of all levels of attainment when compared with pupils' previous attainment in the national tests taken at the age of 11. Compared with the results of similar schools, results in 2001 were above average in English, mathematics and science. A well above average proportion of pupils gained Level 6 or above in all three subjects. Results are improving at a rate similar to the national improvement. This is a good achievement for the school because its results at the time of the previous inspection were already well above the national average. The standards of work seen in classes in Year 9 are currently well above average in English, mathematics and science.

4. In 2000, GCSE results in English and science were well above average and represent very good achievement based on pupils' prior attainment. Results in mathematics in that year were above average and indicate good achievement. In 2001, the GCSE results improved further. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in science and mathematics increased.

5. Pupils achieve very well in English in all years because the teaching is consistently good and pupils are very keen to do well. The very effective management of the English department ensures that its very good documentation and clear procedures track pupils' progress well. As a result, pupils learn at an appropriately fast rate. They know what they have to do to improve. Teachers of English share a common vision for the development of courses. Through working together, they enable pupils to receive a consistently good quality of learning experiences in the subject. The English department has made good use of the National Literacy Strategy. Accordingly, pupils acquire very good skills of oracy and literacy. They use these skills to very good effect in all subjects. Pupils who are gifted or talented enhance their work through the fast-tracking approach in Year 9 and through the provision of additional, after-school classes for pupils in Year 11.

6. In mathematics, pupils achieve very well in Years 7 to 9 and well in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is better in Years 7 to 9 because the introduction of the three-part lesson, as part of the National Numeracy Strategy, has had a positive effect in raising standards. This is particularly evident in the introductory sessions to lessons, when pupils are quickly engaged in mental mathematical activities of suitable difficulty and challenge. Pupils' very positive attitudes to work and their very good behaviour are important factors that enable them to make good and often very good progress. In most lessons, not only do pupils work at a fast rate to complete all the set tasks accurately, they also challenge their teachers with searching questions to confirm or to extend their understanding of the work. Teaching is generally good. It encourages pupils to think about and understand mathematics rather than merely getting pupils to repeat exercises mechanically. Pupils who are gifted and talented achieve very well in GCSE examinations taken early at the end of Year 10. However, in Year 11, they do not have opportunity to take a suitably demanding course in mathematics. Accordingly, these pupils do not maximise their potential in the subject by the age of 16 despite many having gained A* and A grades in the GCSE examination. The school is aware of this situation and is considering the implementation of a more rigorous mathematics course for the highest attainers in Year 11.

7. In science, pupils achieve high standards because the well-planned programmes of work provide them with plenty of opportunities to work independently. The schemes of work provide stimulating experiences in relevant scientific contexts that motivate the pupils to maximise their progress. For example, in work on alternative energy, pupils in a class in Year 9 received guidance as to what they would need in order to conduct research into the advantages and disadvantages of different sources of energy. They subsequently gave a talk to the rest of the class about their findings that indicated a very good awareness of the processes and issues involved. Pupils benefited from being able to work at a pace suitable to their level of attainment. Pupils enhance their performance in GCSE examinations because they start the course in Year 9 immediately after completion of the national tests for pupils aged 14. This arrangement means that pupils have more time in Year 11 to revise and consolidate earlier work. The good and sometimes very good teaching, combined with pupils' very purposeful and positive approaches to their work leads to high achievement. Despite a recent large turnover of staff, pupils have benefited from having the same teacher throughout the course. Achievement is high since teachers get to know the pupils very well and pupils know exactly what is expected of them.

8. In 2000, the school's GCSE results were well above the national average. They improved further in 2001. They represent very good achievement when compared with pupils' previous attainment in the national tests taken two years earlier and good achievement when compared with the results obtained by pupils in similar schools. Results in many subjects were high. In 2000 and again in 2001, a good proportion of GCSE results were at the highest grades of A* and A in English, English literature, mathematics, science, art and design, French, music and physical education. The school is justifiably proud of its success in exceeding its challenging targets for attainment in GCSE examinations in 2001.

9. The school has succeeded in removing the gap between the performances of boys and girls in GCSE examinations. Its strategies to raise the already well above average results achieved by boys is succeeding to the extent that, in 2001, the proportion of boys achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C was slightly higher than the proportion of girls doing so, even though girls' results remained well above average.

10. Pupils' very good achievement in French illustrates the success of the department's strategies to raise the attainment of boys and to enhance the learning of pupils who are gifted or talented. The quality of teaching of French is very good and is a most important

contributory factor to the high standards achieved. Pupils who are capable linguists have been identified. They receive additional and appropriately difficult work to extend them in a special, once-weekly session. The school participates in a national research project on boys' performance in modern foreign languages. It was selected to participate because the achievements in GCSE examinations of boys have been consistently well above the national average results for boys, especially in French. Pupils learn very well in French because they like the way it is taught and respond very well. They enjoy being able to take part in practical activities related to real-life situations such as role-plays with unpredictable aspects, open-ended oral tasks and writing letters.

11. In art and design, GCSE results are very good. A large proportion of pupils attain grades A* and A. Standards are high because the leadership of the department provides inspiration to the pupils and teachers to achieve at the highest possible level. The expectations set by teachers are very high, as they are in most subjects. Pupils gain a very good understanding of the subject through the policy of ensuring that they master the basic skills of the subject before embarking too soon on uninformed creativity. The quality of display of pupils' work in art and design is very good. Not only does it provide a considerable lift to the general environment of the school but it also serves as a motivation to other pupils to achieve their best in the subject.

12. In physical education, standards are also high. In 2000, pupils achieved outstanding GCSE results in the subject. Several factors account for pupils' success in physical education. Teachers plan their schemes of work very effectively, after a careful analysis of pupils' skills and learning needs. Pupils receive plenty of encouragement to do well. The department operates on the principle that every pupil has the capacity to succeed in some aspect of physical activity. The arrangements for monitoring pupils' performances provide all pupils with appropriate and personal guidance on how to improve. The excellent leadership and management of the department and the commitment and industry of the talented teachers motivate pupils to seek the highest possible standards.

13. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. They make very good progress because they are taught well, have generally good support and in most subjects receive work that is carefully matched to their needs. The few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English are making very good progress as a result of the specialist support they receive. In some rooms, for example in design and technology, the display of key words in the pupils' mother language assists their learning. The achievement and progress of pupils of ethnic minority heritage match that of other pupils.

14. In all subjects, pupils' standards are influenced positively by the quality of teaching, which is seldom less than good. Pupils make a very positive contribution to their own standards through their very purposeful and enthusiastic approach to learning. The school is not complacent about the high standards it achieves. It is constantly seeking ways to do even better. It sets very demanding targets for improvement.

The quality of teaching is good. It has a positive influence on pupils' learning.

15. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. On balance, it is good. The proportion of very good teaching has increased. The quality of teaching is good in all years. Because pupils in Year 11 were on work experience during the inspection, the judgements about the quality of teaching in Year 11 are based on scrutiny of their books and coursework, and consideration of assessments related to pupils' prior attainment. Teaching is often very good and occasionally excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching is effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. However, the provision for pupils who are gifted or talented varies from very good in subjects such as English, French, art and design and

physical education to satisfactory in others. Throughout the school, teaching is very good in English and is good in mathematics and science. The teaching of literacy is very good in most subjects. The teaching of numeracy is good. Parents are justified in their view that the teachers are caring and have high expectations.

16. Pupils achieve very well because they make very good progress in many lessons. They consolidate their knowledge and increase their understanding of work in most subjects through conscientious completion of homework that is of suitable quality. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations. Teachers encourage pupils to work hard. Most teachers use a good variety of activities to keep pupils' interest throughout the lesson. They make increasingly good use of assessment of pupils' work and progress to detect underachievement. They set suitable targets for pupils to improve their work. Very good relationships among pupils and between teachers and pupils create a purposeful atmosphere for working. Pupils of all levels of attainment have very positive attitudes so that work proceeds at a brisk pace in the large majority of lessons. Pupils know what they are expected to learn and how they can improve, because teachers plan the lessons very well to ensure good progression, share the lesson's objectives with the class and frequently review pupils' progress. Pupils enjoy the work because it is usually of sufficient difficulty to make most of them think hard. They enjoy working independently.

17. The school is succeeding in its aim of continually improving the quality of teaching and learning. The arrangements for the professional development of staff are effective except that more training is needed for teachers to use ICT well. These include observations of lessons, which are followed by helpful, professional feedback to teachers. The readiness to share good practice leads to a consistency in the quality of teaching within subjects such as English, modern foreign languages and art and design. Considerable improvements in the provision and organisation of work for pupils with special educational needs have helped these pupils to make very good progress. They benefit from good support and work that is matched very well to their individual needs in most subjects. Pupils for whom English is an additional language, particularly those at an early stage of learning the language, make progress at a suitably fast rate because they receive good support and work of appropriate difficulty.

18. Two important features of teaching contribute towards pupils' very good achievement. Most teachers use their very good knowledge of their specialist subject to enthuse the pupils and encourage them to achieve as well as possible. Secondly, the planning of most lessons is very effective in ensuring pupils' learning proceeds at a fast pace through the use of a range of interesting and carefully timed activities matched well to pupils' capabilities.

19. Teachers have generally high expectations for pupils. They ensure that pupils learn very well and quickly in the large majority of classes because they encourage pupils to play an active part in the learning process. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils contribute to a very good climate for learning in most lessons. Pupils are anxious to do well. They learn very well because teachers present a clear outline of the lesson's aims and provide a good range of timed activities and targets. Teachers link the work to past and future learning. Previous work is then revised quickly. Teachers make good use of probing questions and relevant discussion to check pupils' understanding. Because many pupils have very good skills in speaking, teachers often make effective use of the discussions in class, in pairs or in groups, to help pupils to work at a fast pace. In lessons in modern languages, for example, teachers very skilfully ensure that oral questions are of appropriate difficulty for pupils of different levels of attainment. They also take care to ensure that the oral responses are suitably extended and comprehensive according to the individual pupil's capability.

20. Many of the features common to the very good lessons observed in many subjects were observed in a particularly successful lesson in French for pupils of high attainment in Year 9. In this lesson, pupils of all levels of prior attainment within the class made excellent progress because they were constantly challenged to think and to give detailed oral explanations to indicate their understanding and use of the perfect tense. An extremely fast, rapid-fire introduction, conducted entirely in French, by pupils as well as the teacher, showed that pupils' standards in French are very high. Pupils in this class are clearly well on the way to emulating, in two years' time, the very high standards achieved in GCSE examinations in French. The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject enthused the pupils. All pupils, including the boys, enjoyed providing extended oral answers that revealed very good knowledge and use of vocabulary, good accents and an accurate use of grammar and construction of sentences. The teacher made sure that every pupil played an active part in the lesson. Pupils' response to the almost breathtaking pace of the lesson was a determination to keep up, and they did. Pupils particularly enjoyed the choral reinforcement of key words and phrases and even burst into song. Very effective use of an overhead projector by the teacher ensured very good progression in the work and helped to keep a lively momentum. Pupils of minority ethnic heritage achieved equally as well as other pupils because all pupils were expected to work at their best. Pupils maximise their learning because their books are marked well and they have plenty of practice at an appropriate level of difficulty in the four key skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. The excellent relationships between the teacher and the class matched the description made by a pupil in Year 11, who had earlier told the inspector that some teaching in French was 'fantastic'.

21. The use of the three-part lesson, based on the National Numeracy strategy is having a positive effect on raising standards even higher in mathematics in Years 7 to 9. This was apparent in a very good lesson about statistics in Year 7, in which pupils were able to draw and interpret bar charts at a standard above expectations for their age. During the 'starter' session, pupils gave accurate and full descriptions of statistical terms in response to the teachers' effective questioning. This activity stimulated pupils' thinking and led into a discussion by the class of how to interpret data effectively, particularly when data and methods increase in complexity. Pupils acted as the teacher, using the overhead projector to explain their work. A wide range of challenging and timed activities to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject followed this. The lesson ended appropriately with a review of what had been learned and a discussion of sensible suggestions made by pupils about application of the work to real situations.

22. Very good teaching of the basic skills of the subject enhances pupils' learning in most subjects. For example, very good teaching led to very good learning by pupils in a lesson in art and design for pupils in Year 8. Throughout the lesson, which was conducted at a fast and appropriate pace, pupils responded very eagerly to the teacher's encouragement and praise. The lesson began with the teacher relating the work to be done to previous work. He then explained clearly the criteria for successful completion of the project and the need for pupils to develop their drawing skills so that they could make good pictures of three-dimensional objects. The activities were carefully timed to enable pupils to work in small groups, independently and at a level of difficulty suited to their very different capabilities. This enabled the teacher to circulate and discuss with pupils how to improve their individual skills in drawing. Towards the end of the lesson, the teacher indicated appreciation of pupils' work and arranged for the class to examine and evaluate each other's work. Pupils enjoyed this activity. They developed confidence through increased understanding of the topic by saying what they liked about other pupils' work. The teacher made effective use of pupils' work to elicit ideas for homework. As in other subjects, the teaching of literacy skills is an important feature. Displays and the use of key words increase pupils' understanding of their work in art and design. In this lesson, the teacher made the pupils think carefully about what words could be used to describe what the atmosphere was like in the area in which pupils had carried out

their observational drawings. The very high quality and vast amount of displays of pupils' work in art and design indicate that pupils and teachers show pride in their work and that good or better teaching is a regular occurrence in art and design.

23. Pupils acquire very good skills, knowledge and understanding in the different subjects and improve their basic skills of literacy, ICT and numeracy. The teaching of literacy and oracy is very good. Pupils use these skills with confidence and competence in all subjects. A few teachers have acquired good skills in ICT. As a result, pupils receive good opportunities to use their good ICT skills to good effect to assist their work in a few subjects. The teaching of numeracy skills is good. Pupils use their very good mathematical skills well in many subjects.

24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now very good. Teachers make effective use of the individual education plans to ensure that the work is of appropriate difficulty for individual pupils' needs. In an English lesson in Year 10, for example, pupils made very good progress because the very good teaching and the suitably challenging work and activities motivated them. In another English lesson, for pupils in Year 9, low-attaining pupils made very good gains in knowledge when carrying out a research into the differences between formal and informal writing of letters. Pupils with special educational needs made very good progress in this lesson because the support assistant worked actively with them and pupils were confident about approaching her for help.

Learning is very good because pupils have very positive attitudes and want to do well.

25. The quality of learning is very good because pupils behave very well, acquire very good skills in the different subjects and have extremely positive attitudes and mature approaches to their work. Pupils make very good progress because they concentrate very well in class and work hard and enthusiastically. In a few subjects, they enhance their work through the use of their ICT skills.

26. In only two out of the 57 lessons observed were pupils' attitudes and behaviour less than good and these were satisfactory. In the large majority of the lessons seen, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work were very good and sometimes excellent. In several lessons, the quality of pupils' learning was higher than the quality of the teaching. Pupils respect the teachers and enjoy very good relationships with them. They want to learn and have a positive and purposeful approach to their learning. The large majority of pupils complete their homework conscientiously and well. Pupils' attendance is well above average. This contributes to the continuity of their learning experiences.

27. A typical example of pupils' bringing their good attitudes to bear on their learning occurred in a very good physical education lesson for pupils in Year 9. Pupils were keen and showed considerable interest in all they did. They were extremely well turned out and behaved in exemplary fashion. They worked very well in pairs and cooperated very effectively to compose and practise their routines of dance in martial arts. In a high-attaining science class in Year 9, pupils were eager to take in knowledge. They were highly motivated and responded very well to the demands placed upon them in a lesson about genetics.

28. Pupils express pride in their school. The absence of litter reflects this pride. Although the accommodation is cramped, even without the presence of pupils of Year 11, pupils respect the property. The walls in many classrooms and corridors are alive with very good displays of pupils' work, particularly in art and design. Despite the narrowness of corridors, and displays running from floor to ceiling, the work on display remains in very good condition.

Pupils behave very sensibly around the school. They know that any incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with promptly and effectively. Younger pupils value the system of prefects. They look up to the older pupils, who are good role models. Pupils act maturely and help to establish a very good atmosphere for learning and a secure and friendly environment. When they enter the hall for assembly, pupils are orderly and dignified. They listen carefully and in silence.

29. Pupils respond very well to the school's high expectations for them. They have a commitment to work hard to achieve high standards. They display tolerance and respect for the feelings of others and show a readiness to cooperate well with each other and with their teachers. They willingly engage in the outstanding and wide range of extra-curricular activities. They appreciate the high standards of attainment in the school and nearly all strive to achieve as well as they can. Virtually all of the 402 parental questionnaires that were returned, reported that the school expected pupils to work hard. More than a half of the replies strongly agreed with this view.

The very good leadership of the headteacher, supported well by senior staff ensures that standards remain high and that the quality of education continues to improve.

30. The very good leadership of the headteacher is an important factor in the school's continued success and good improvements. He is approachable to staff and pupils alike and has a visible presence around the school. He has a good knowledge of the pupils. He leads by persuasion and through personal example. Under his sensitive and firm guidance, the school constantly seeks to achieve a high quality of performance in all aspects of its work. The school has a determination to succeed. It has a commitment to assist pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment to achieve the highest standards possible both academically and in their all-round, personal development.

31. The headteacher and governing body set out a clear educational direction for the school that is communicated well to all staff. As described in the previous inspection report of 1996, the headteacher is a successful and energetic manager. He has very high, but realistic, expectations for staff and pupils. His caring approach enables him to gain the respect and understanding of staff. For example, he took over the timetable of a teacher for a day, so that he could remind himself of the pressures of teaching a range of different classes for every lesson in a school day. Because of difficulties in recruiting a mathematics teacher, he has temporarily taken on the responsibility of teaching mathematics to a few classes in order to influence the quality of teaching and to help the department to meet its targets for improvement and to maintain high standards.

32. Procedures for evaluating the school's performance and planning for improvement have improved and are good. The outcomes of these procedures are sometimes very good. The school has a self-evaluating culture. It is constantly seeking to do better. There is a lack of complacency. The head teacher and senior managers frequently and rigorously monitor data relating to the school's performance. They conduct realistic appraisals of the school's current strengths and areas for improvement. They concentrate suitably on raising achievement, assisting pupils' all-round personal development and seeking improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. With the governing body, they set suitably challenging targets for pupils' and all departments' performances in external examinations, after a careful study of pupils' prior attainment and other relevant assessment data. The aim of raising the attainment of all pupils to the highest possible level is evident throughout the school and is achieving considerable success. This success is indicated in the very good GCSE results gained in 2000. These results were considerably higher than expected when measured against pupils' previous attainments in the national tests taken at the ages of 11 and 14. Results in 2001 were even higher and indicate the school's refusal to be complacent about

its standards. Pupils know that they are expected to work hard. They respond very positively to try to achieve their best. Teachers have a shared commitment to improve further the quality of teaching and learning. The school met its very challenging targets for GCSE results in 2001. Targets for future performances in external examinations have been set at challenging rather than comfortable levels.

33. As a result of the school's very effective leadership and management and its better procedures for monitoring and evaluating its performance, improvement since the previous inspection in 1996 is good. The commitment and hard work of staff at all levels and the active cooperation of the pupils have contributed positively to the good progress made. The school has consolidated and built well upon its previous strengths, particularly those relating to success in external examinations. Progress has been good in tackling the key issues identified in the previous inspection. Pupils now work more independently. The provision of resources in the library has increased and is good. The library is now more often available for use by pupils. The appointment of a bursar has meant that financial management has improved considerably. The programme for personal, social and health education has improved greatly and is good, mainly as a result of the effective work done by a member of the leadership group. The school now provides good opportunities for pupils to gain insight into the values and beliefs of other cultures. Statutory requirements for pupils' entitlements to subjects of the curriculum are in place, although the school still does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of daily collective worship.

34. The lack of delegation was a justified criticism of the school's leadership in the previous report. Delegation is now much more effective and is good. It enables the school to operate efficiently and to make good improvements. The head teacher receives good support from the rest of the leadership group that consists of the deputy head, the bursar and three senior teachers. The responsibilities of the senior managers are defined well. Lines of accountability are clear. As a result, some very good improvements have occurred. The bursar, who is not a teacher, manages the school's finances and site very well, in appropriate consultation with the governing body and senior staff. This has enabled the head teacher to spend more time on educational priorities such as developments to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The deputy head has overseen the introduction and development of a greatly improved system of assessment. This has helped to make teachers more aware of pupils' capabilities and to set suitably challenging targets for improvement for pupils and departments.

35. The school has a friendly and positive ethos within which staff and pupils try very hard and successfully to achieve high standards of work and behaviour. Pupils are generally happy at school and proud to belong to it. They know that they are expected to work hard. The good provision of care and support encourages very positive relationships between pupils and teachers that help to create a very purposeful environment for learning. Teachers contribute enthusiastically and industriously to all aspects of life within the school. The morale of teachers and pupils is high. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils create a good team spirit within the school. A very large proportion of pupils make very good advances in their academic and personal development through active participation in a very wide range of extra-curricular learning opportunities of high quality.

Through active participation in an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities, pupils improve their work in many subjects and enhance their personal development

36. The quality and range of extra-curricular activities are notable strengths of the school. They make an important and valuable contribution to pupils' very good learning. Significantly, every teacher either runs or assists with the running of a club or other activity outside normal, curricular time.

37. A large number of pupils enhance their personal and social development through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Around 80 pupils in Year 10 are preparing for the bronze award and about 30 pupils in Year 11 are pursuing the silver award. An unique feature is the aviary through which pupils have very good opportunities to extend their scientific knowledge by breeding budgerigars, including some rare species. The drama club is heavily oversubscribed. It provides a high quality of enrichment activities for some 40 pupils every lunchtime.

38. Many pupils make effective use of the homework club that is held in the school library every day before and after school.

39. Many subjects run classes after school to assist pupils' preparation for external examinations. Others also run clubs for recreational and social purposes. Pupils who have learning difficulties can attend special sessions to improve their reading. A few departments, such as French, make provision to extend and challenge pupils who are gifted or talented. Many pupils improve their standards in physical education and games through attendance at a very good range of sporting clubs and activities. Pupils enhance their musical skills through attendance at after-school practices and through special tuition in individual and small groups. The ICT network sessions are very popular. They enable pupils to improve their skills in using a computer.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

GCSE results in history are improving but are not as good as results in other subjects.

40. In 2000, the only subject in which GCSE results at grades A*-C was well below average was history. Pupils' overall results in history were lower than the results they achieved in most other subjects. GCSE results in history improved considerably in 2001 and were around the national average. They remain below standards achieved in most other subjects.

41. Senior staff have recognised the need to improve standards in history. The results in 2001 indicate that the strategies for improvement are working. Members of the leadership group assist in the teaching of the subject. The history department has acquired a clearer insight into the assessment procedures for the National Curriculum for pupils at the end of Year 9. This has meant a more realistic and higher grading of pupils' achievement, leading to higher expectations of pupils' achievements at GCSE examinations. Previously, the history department was grading its pupils too harshly at the end of Year 9. Accordingly it underestimated pupils' potential attainments and had lower expectations than other departments for pupils' results at GCSE. Improvements in the quality of teaching are helping to raise achievement in the subject.

Attainment at the age of 16 in mathematics, though well above average, is not as high as in English and science in Years 10 and 11. It is not high enough for some high-attaining pupils.

42. The school's GCSE results in mathematics are well above average. However, pupils' results in mathematics are below those they achieve in the other core subjects of English and science. For example, in 2000, comparing pupils' GCSE results at grades A*-C with expectations based on prior performance in the national tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 9, the results in English and science were well above expectations and very good. The results for mathematics were above average and good. Compared with the results achieved

by pupils in similar schools, performance in English was above average, in science was average and in mathematics was below average. This is mainly due to a limited range of teaching methods used in mathematics classes in Years 10 and 11. The mathematics department has ensured a consistent quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 through its implementation of methods of teaching suggested by the National Numeracy Strategy. However, though pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well, on balance, this is due in no small measure to their positive attitudes and keenness to succeed, irrespective of the quality of teaching.

43. The high-attaining pupils who sit the GCSE examination in mathematics early, at the end of Year 10, achieve very well, especially at grades A* and A. However, in Year 11, although they study a GCSE course in statistics, these pupils do not extend their knowledge, understanding and use of mathematics so that they do not reach their full potential in the subject by the age of 16. These pupils have the capacity to follow mathematics courses of an equivalent standard to AS-level.

Pupils make insufficient use of their good skills in ICT to develop their work in most subjects.

44. The school meets statutory requirements for the provision of ICT. Pupils achieve well in the specific lessons for ICT in Years 7 to 9. They use their good skills in ICT to develop and enrich their learning experiences in a few subjects throughout the school. However, most pupils have insufficient opportunities to raise their standards in this key skill across the curriculum. This is because the school has insufficient computers to cope with the demands made upon the facilities. The ratio of pupils to computers within the school is higher than average at 12 pupils to every computer. A further shortcoming is that not all teachers are suitably skilled in using ICT to best advantage. The training needs of teachers have been suitably identified. However, the availability and quality of training for teachers to become competent and confident users of ICT in their subjects have been limited.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45. The school has a very good awareness of its strengths and the areas for development. In order to improve standards further the school should continue its work on the following issues.

- (1) Further improve GCSE results in history.
(Paragraphs: 40, 41)
- (2) Raise pupils' achievement in GCSE examinations in mathematics so that it matches the higher achievement in English and science, and ensure that higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 receive work of appropriate difficulty.
(Paragraphs: 6, 42, 43)
- (3) Make better provision for pupils to use their good skills of ICT to enhance their work in many subjects.
(Paragraphs: 17, 44)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	57
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	24	24	8	0	0	0
Percentage	2	42	42	14	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1215
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	27

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	162

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	86

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1

National comparative data	7.7
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National comparative data	1.1
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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	117	130	247

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	96	98	104
	Girls	117	110	112
	Total	213	208	216
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	86 (91)	84 (86)	87 (84)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	51 (60)	63 (64)	53 (43)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	95	105	96
	Girls	117	117	112
	Total	212	222	208
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	86 (86)	90 (89)	84 (87)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	46 (52)	73 (62)	43 (48)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	110	134	244

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	80	108	110
	Girls	94	134	134
	Total	174	242	244
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	72 (67)	97 (96)	100 (99)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	86.6 (90.6)	94.5 (95.6)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per pupil	School	47.6 (46)
	National	39.1 (38.4)

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	76
Pakistani	13
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1123
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	3	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	20	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	66.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	441

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.3
Key Stage 4	23.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2 799 215
Total expenditure	2 740 739
Expenditure per pupil	2269
Balance brought forward from previous year	19 068
Balance carried forward to next year	58 476

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	24.1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1215
Number of questionnaires returned	402

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	56	8	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	56	4	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	59	3	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	61	14	2	2
The teaching is good.	29	60	5	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	50	19	3	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	49	4	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	44	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	52	16	3	7
The school is well led and managed.	32	55	4	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	62	3	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	50	2	0	6